THE

PICTURE;

OR,

MY OWN CHOICE.

By Wood

A COMEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

Anon.

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1796.

BRITISH MUSEUM 15 62

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

STERLING, A Colonel in the Army—intended for *Emily Ludgate*, but in love with *Fanny Melville*.

RACKET, His friend, ſon to *Alderman Stocks*, bred to the law—in love with *Emily*, but without his father's knowledge.

ALDERMAN STOCKS, Father to *Racket*—prudent, but loving to do generous actions in ſecret—extravagantly fond of his ſon, and intending to marry him to *Emily Ludgate*, but without his ſon's knowledge.

FORMAL, A ſtiff Hypocrite of an amorous diſpoſition.

NOUVELLE, A tattling News-monger, knowing every body's ſecrets.

BILLY BRIEF, *alias* ROULEAU, *alias* BRIM, *alias* SOLOMON, An Attorney's Clerk, and Uſurer's Agent.

TRUSTY, Servant to *Sterling*.

CURL, Servant to *Racket*.

WOMEN.

FANNY MELVILLE, An Orphan, her parents unknown—bred up by *Henrietta Canvas*, and taught miniature-painting by her brother—an innocent, ſimple girl, in love with *Sterling*.

EMILY LUDGATE, Daughter to *Lady Ludgate*, purpoſed as a wife for *Racket*—afterwards deſtined for *Sterling*.

LADY LUDGATE, Widow of a Lord Mayor—of foreign extraction—extravagantly fond of title, and determined not to marry her daughter to any body without one.

MRS. CANVAS, Widow to the brother of *Henrietta Canvas*—an intriguing, avaricious woman.

HENRIETTA CANVAS, Siſter to *Mrs. Canvas* by marriage—friend and protectreſs of *Fanny*.

FLIRT, A ſaucy Chambermaid—ſervant to *Mrs. Canvas*

ALEXANDER 1883 GARDYNE

THE

PICTURE;

OR,

MY OWN CHOICE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Sterling's *Lodging.* STERLING *and* RACKET.

Racket.

WELCOME, my noble friend, welcome from the frigid regions of the Rhine, and the horrors of war. [*Embracing him.*

Sterling. Thank you, Charles, thank you.

Racket. The fatigues of a hard campaign have not altered you, Colonel. *(Surveying him.)* Gad I ſhall loſe my high credit with the fair, which I have enjoyed without control ſince Sterling left them.

Sterling. No, Racket, you'll find no rival in Sterling, nor need your accompliſhments fear one.

ALEXANDER GARDYNE 1883

Racket. Your uſual modeſt diffidence I ſee ſtill, Colonel—or perhaps ſome German fair one has kept captive your heart on the Continent, or a little exiled nun ſecured an intereſt in its ſenſibility.

Sterling. Neither; for though Germany may boaſt of its beauty, yet our country's cauſe required a duty too urgent to give leiſure for ſofter indulgences.

Racket. What, no ſweet ſmiles of Venus to ſooth the ſtern brow of Mars!

Sterling. None, Charles, none—Valour and patriotiſm are the ſole paſſions of a Britiſh ſoldier on ſervice. The delights of love we reſerve as a reward from our own fair countrywomen, when the ſucceſs of our ſwords ſhall have ſecured to us the peaceful enjoyment of them.

Racket. Have you ſeen uncle Sir Figure Finance ſince your arrival?

Sterling. I have.

Racket. Then we ſhall have you ſummoned up to the Houſe of Peers.—His influence will inſure your petition.

Sterling. My juſt right will inſure it me, Charles. The deſert of a virtuous anceſtry is the only influence that will place me there.

Racket. And your ſuit in Chancery—I preſume his great power will do ſomething for you there.

Sterling. Why there you are miſtaken again; and, though a lawyer, appear not very converſant in the ſpirit or practice of our courts.

Racket. Indeed, Colonel, my buſineſs there does not fatigue me, nor am I the firſt man in Weſtminſter Hall, even in my own opinion.——But where do you dine to-day?

Sterling.

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Sterling. Where you will.

Racket. I'll meet you, then, at our old quarters by ſix.—Farewel. *Exit.*

Sterling. Adieu.—I cannot drive this lovely girl from my thoughts.—I ſhall never be happy without her. But what, Colonel Sterling a dupe to an unknown girl! I ſhall be hooted at by my whole corps, and ſtuck up in caricature, as the dying military lover.—Shall I attempt to ſeduce her?—To ſpoil innocence unprotected and friendleſs? Without pretending to more virtue than my brother ſoldiers, I could never bring my mind to reliſh ſuch victories as thoſe.

Enter TRUSTY.

Truſty. Sir, the broker's below.

Sterling. You found one quickly then, Truſty.

Truſty. Oh, Sir, people of this ſort are as numerous now as quack doctors, and as dexterous in providing ſpecifics for a decayed purſe as thoſe are for a decayed conſtitution.

Sterling. And with the ſame ſucceſs, as one lends a helping hand to death, ſo does the others to deſtruction.——But ſend this money quack in. *Exit* Truſty.

Enter ROULEAU.

I have ſent for you in a little matter, friend, that requires your agency.—I am in want of money.

Rouleau. And not out of faſhion, Sir.

Sterling. Poſſibly. But I can diſpenſe with your wit, if you can furniſh me with the caſh.

Rouleau. Excuſe me, Sir; to give a currency to my gold, I like to alloy it with a little compound of wit.

Sterling. I have heard, friend, that to mould that metal into money, 'twas neceſſary to allow it a baſe mixture.—But to buſineſs.—Your name?

Rouleau. Rouleau, at your ſervice.

Sterling. An honourable appellation, and apropos to your calling.

Rouleau. Yes, Sir, when I ſet up for a loan I have as many ſubſcribers to my ſcrip as a miniſter.

Sterling. And your douceurs are as inviting too.

Rouleau. Your eſtate, Sir.

Sterling. No realized acres, nor one underground friend, but the caſual receipt of a revenue ariſing from the temporary command of ſome powder mines, and a ſuperficial poſſeſſion of a few hard fields of battle.

Rouleau. Powder mines, and fields of battle!—what, Sir, and a perſonal property iſſuing from a crop of dead carcaſes! I ſuppoſe a kind of poſſeſſion in mortmain; zounds, this a new ſecurity to go to market with.

Sterling. Perhaps you'll be pleaſed with ſomething more animate. What think you of a life-eſtate during breath and good behaviour on a colonel's commiſſion in his Majeſty's ſervice.

Rouleau. Oh, Sir, people now are backward in advancing money, held on the tenure of military ſervice. Exploſion, bayonet, and ball, bear a high premium.

Sterling. Well, calculate the chances, and tell me whether you are willing to ſerve me?

Sterling.

Rouleau. I am willing to ſerve any gentleman in diſtreſs.

Sterling. *(Aſide.)* Aye, and to diſtreſs him too by your ſervice.

Rouleau. Have you no funded intereſt in reverſion, Sir? no pretty landſcape with a diſtant proſpect of ſome old manor-houſe in ſucceſſion.

Sterling. I have a ſuit depending in Chancery of ſome thouſands per annum,

Rouleau. Indeed.

Sterling. And petitioning for a peerage.

Rouleau. That we'll not mention to the lenders: they have a natural antipathy to the ſacred privileges of peers and parliament men.

Sterling. You may tell them of ſome expectations from my uncle Sir Figure Finance.

Rouleau. Sir Figure Finance, your uncle—Gad that's a fine back for the moneyiſts—Oh, Sir, they'll bite at contract, ſcrip, and lottery tickets, like allies at a loan, or fundleſs friends at a ſubſidy.

Sterling. Set about my buſineſs then directly, Mr. Rouleau.

Rouleau. With diſpatch, ſecrecy, and honour. *(Aſide.)* I have now hope for a ſnug ſinecure myſelf of ſome thouſands per annum. *Exit.*

Sterling. I have ſet that to work, and will now viſit my charmer. *Exit.*

SCENE

SCENE II.

A Merchant's Room. STOCKS *and* LEDGER.

Stocks. Ledger, have you diſpatched the ſeveral articles as deſired?

Ledger. Yes, Sir, they are ſent as appointed.

Stocks. Did you ſee the wounded ſailor in a port of ſafe anchorage for life?

Ledger. In a ſnug birth, cloſe moored along ſide the decayed hulks of his weather-beaten parents.

Stocks. Are the ſoldier's widow and her five children provided with a covering?

Ledger. As clean a houſe as hands could make, and well furniſhed with every thing.

Stocks. Well, thank Heaven that I am thus enabled to ſoften the dreadful evils of war, and to do ſome little good.

Ledger. Little good, Sir! To yourſelf then you mean, to others too much.

Stocks. To others too much! How ſo, Ledger, is my credit marred by theſe benefits?

Ledger. Credit, Sir! that's out of the queſtion, for you'll not ſuffer them to be known.

Stocks. Is my fortune leſſened?

Ledger. No, thank Heaven! your ſucceſſes in trade daily increaſe; and 'tis well they do—to a great amount.

Stocks. Shall I then be ſparing becauſe Heaven is bounteous? No, no, Ledger; the power which gives it plentifully into this hand orders me to deal it out liberally with that, reſerving the ſecrecy

crecy of donation to its own reward; and by that power, as long as I am a fellow ſubject, I will have a fellow feeling for the miſeries of my countrymen. But, Ledger, you have not forgotten the little private articles of commerce for the enobling of my ſon?

Ledger. No, Sir, the letters patent, and the ſtar and ribband will be here preſently.

Stocks. Charles will look like a new conſtellation in this hemiſphere; and we ſhall have our courtly aſtronomers ſpying at him as a phænomenon beyond their focus of apprehenſion.

Ledger. There was ſome demur though, Sir, at the Cuſtom-houſe about admitting them.

Stocks. Aye, how ſo?

Ledger. Why, Sir, the Commiſſioners were in doubt whether alien honours were not antiperogative, and titles ſeizable.

Stocks. What, ſeize nobility! Zooks! don't they know how ſacred its rights are in this country?

Ledger. Yes, Sir, that was the queſtion; whether the currency of theſe foreign dignities might not debaſe the ſterling one of our own.

Stocks. No, no, Ledger, they are diſcordant metals that will neither blend nor aſſimulate. The Britiſh peerage is a column of pure gold that will not adulterate—'tis unique in itſelf—a pillar that poiſes and props our fine old fabric—the very corner ſtone of the conſtitution, concentering the two extremes of the building, and giving grace and ſtrength to the whole.

Ledger. To what uſe do you mean to apply theſe exotic honours, Sir?

Stocks. They are to ſatisfy the ſcruples of a rich

rich old lady, between whoſe daughter and my ſon I am negociating a treaty of marriage. The old dowager is of foreign extraction, and ſo paſſionately fond of title, that ſhe will admit no one as a candidate for the young lady who is not either capt with a coronet, or emblazoned by a ſtar. By her advice I ſent abroad for theſe baubles, where they are to be had for money, and have imported them as letters of credence for the courtſhip of Charles—Oh, here he comes. *Exit* Ledger.

Enter RACKET, *in a plain black coat.*

Well, boy, what news at the Temple?—you are profound politicians there—are we to have peace or war? any news of victory to our arms?

Racket. None, Sir, that I know of. I never meddle with politics—my war conſiſts in words—my victories in foiling the manœuvres of a brother counſel, and my peace in puniſhing thoſe that break the king's. I am ſo intrenched in law, that, were the Temple taken ſword in hand, I ſhould be found, like Archimedes, abſorbed in ſtudy.

Stocks. And you ſee, Charles, how I am labouring and toiling, and all for you.

Racket. Thanks to your goodneſs, Sir, but I find that knowledge, like money, the more you have, the more you covet, and books are enormouſly expenſive. There's a fine library to be diſpoſed of, but my income is already expended in purchaſes of this kind. I am come, Sir, therefore, to entreat that ſo fine a bargain of knowledge may not eſcape me. Your kindneſs, I am ſure, will ſupply. *Leaning on* Stocks *coaxingly.*

Stocks. Why, aye, boy, theſe expences are rational,

tional, and pleaſe me—Well, a hundred or two I ſuppoſe?

Racket. No, Sir, no, five hundred.

Stocks. Zooks! five hundred, Charles!

Racket. (Still leaning on Stocks' *ſhoulders, and in a coaxing tone repeating his words.)* Why theſe expences are rational, and pleaſe you.

Stocks. (Looking tenderly and ſly on him.) Ah, ah, ah—ſly boy. He makes an old fool of me—— Well, well, give your bookſeller a draft on me for the amount.

Racket. (Aſide.) Gad that won't do for my ſchemes. But theſe rogues of bookſellers don't like the bartering of books for paper. I had rather have bank notes, Sir.

Stocks. Bank notes, Charles—why theſe rogues don't like the bartering of books for paper.

Racket. Yes, Sir; that is to ſay, your common paper, vulgar paper; but your bank-note is ſo ſoft and ſilky, it inſinuates itſelf into one's good graces ſo.

(Leaning on Stocks *and taking his hand.*

Stocks. Zooks! it has communicated ſome of its virtues to you, and you are ſtealing into mine. Here, Ledger, bring me five hundred pounds in bank notes.

Ledger. (Within.) Yes, Sir.

Stocks. And now, Sir, I have ſomething to propoſe to you. It is now eighteen years ſince your dear mother, that beſt of women, with your infant ſiſter, were, on their paſſage from the Weſt Indies, buried in a watery grave. Being myſelf ſummoned in a hurry from thence to attend the commands of a dying father, taking you with me,

I left my Anna to follow, with her new-born daughter, but they were never heard of more.

Racket. I have, ere now, heard you tell the melancholy tale with no ſmall emotion.

Stocks. Since then I have led a life of celibacy —Your uncle, in leaving you his little fortune, obliged you to change your name; but as the change is only attached to the eſtate, it will ſerve ſome young branch of the family. You and I are the only ones of the Stocks that are now left; 'tis a valuable name, and has been current on 'Change from father to ſon for many generations. I ſhould like, therefore, to transfer it to poſterity.

Racket. Surely, Sir, you are not thinking of a young wife?

Stocks. Why you would not have an old one, would you?

Racket. I ſhould think one about your own age more fit.

Stocks. To propagate my name to poſterity!— Zooks! you are ſomething ſingular in opinion— and not a little whimſical in choice. But, however, I have fixed my eye upon a fine young girl, and a fine fortune; and her you muſt marry.

Racket. Oh, Sir, I totally agree with you as to the phyſical neceſſity of youth, if I am to marry.

[Ledger *enters with the notes in his hands,* Racket *rubbing his own together, and looking wiſhfully at the notes.*

But who is the happy ſhe? is——

Stocks. That I ſhall inform you of when I have adjuſted other matters, and may call on you perhaps in a day or two, to look at your books.—— Come, Ledger.

[*Taking* Ledger *under the arm and going off with him.*

Racket.

Racket. Gad, Sir, you forget.

[*Pointing to the notes.*

Stocks. [*Giving them with affected difficulty.*]—Here, take 'em then. *Exit.*

[Ledger *and* Stocks *following, but not totally quitting the ſtage.*

Racket. [*Coming forward.*] Here they are—five hundred——and a wife to boot. What! give up Emily!---not for the univerſe. If I can but get over Lady Ludgate's nobility ſcruples ſhe is too good a match for any oppoſition on the part of my father. He may have fixed his choice on another, yet his fondneſs for me will eaſily prevail on him. Now to get rid of ye handſomely.

[*Pocketing the notes, and exit.*

Stocks. [*Coming forward.*] This boy is the very darling of my heart, and my allowance to him is liberal, yet it appears to go from me with reſtraint, that I may check any propenſity to extravagance, though I never perceived ſuch an inclination in him. His ſerious ſtudies, and his plain dreſs, beſpeak a prudence that I like. My only wiſh is to ſee him well married, and, when that is accompliſhed, I mind not how ſoon he ſteps in for the whole, and allots me my common portion of earth.

SCENE III.

A Room for Painting, with a Deſk and Apparatus.

FANNY *ſola.*

Fanny. I am as happy as I can be without my loved friend, and having got to my favourite painting, for which Mr. Canvas, ſeeing ſome taſte, was ſo fond of inſtructing me. I will comfort myſelf as well as I can till my dear friends return. Here are ſome unfiniſhed miniatures, which Mr. Canvas's ſudden death left imperfect; and one of an officer, to me unknown, till he caught me accidentally the other day endeavouring to embelliſh it with the little graces my art is capable of. But, Oh! how ſhort of the original!

Mrs. Canvas. [*Peeping in.*] I hope I don't diſturb you, my dear.

Fanny. By no means, Madam.

Mrs. CANVAS *entering.*

Mrs. Canvas. I am happy to ſee you look more cheerful to day, my love. I hope you will ſoon forget my ſiſter Henrietta, and look on me as your friend.

Fanny. Pardon me, Madam. Oh! may Heaven preſerve me from fogetting, for one moment, my beſt benefactreſs! To her I owe my life, my ſupport, my every thing, yet ſhall I never ceaſe to remember my obligations to you, Madam.

Mrs.

Mrs. Canvas. I am charmed with your ſentiments, [*Aſide.*] though they don't ſo well accord with my own views.——Oh, pray, my dear, how did you like———

Fanny. [*Confuſedly.*] Who---how---what, Madam---Colonel Sterling?

Mrs. Canvas. Yes, Colonel Sterling. Is he not a charming man?

Fanny. If I may judge, a very charming man, Madam—ſuch nobleneſs with ſuch modeſty---ſuch dignity with ſuch ſweetneſs.

Mrs. Canvas. [*Aſide.*] Oh, oh, it works, I find. True, my dear, and I can tell you made a ſenſible impreſſion on him at firſt ſight.

Fanny. No, do not laugh at a fooliſh girl.

Mrs. Canvas. Nay, I am ſerious, I aſſure you, and he has petitioned me to beg a favour of you.

Fanny. [*In ſurpriſe.*] Favour, Madam, what favour?

Mrs. Canvas. Don't be alarmed, my pretty fair one, it is not much, and I hope you'll not deny it me.

Fanny. I am confident, Madam, I could not well deny any favour he could aſk, or you propoſe.

Mrs. Canvas. [*Aſide.*] A pretty confidence truly. It's only, my dear, that you would finiſh the picture Mr. Canvas had begun.

Enter Servant.

Servant. Colonel Sterling is below, Madam.

Mrs. Canvas. Well, my dear, ſhall we give him admiſſion?

Fanny. No.---Yes.----As you pleaſe, Madam. [*Aſide.*] How fooliſh I am, and how I tremble!

Mrs.

Mrs. Canvas. Shew the Colonel in.

[*Exit* Servant.

Enter STERLING.

Sterling. Ladies, your humble ſervant. Madam, [*To* Fanny.] I make a plea of Mrs. Canvas's friendſhip to apologize for the rudeneſs of intruſion the laſt time I had the honour of ſeeing you.

Fanny. No apology was neceſſary, Sir; nothing can proceed from Colonel Sterling to need one.

Mrs. Canvas. Colonel, you are juſt come apropos. I was ſpeaking to Miſs Melville about your picture, and what you requeſt as a favour, ſhe grants with pleaſure.

Sterling. Such amiable good-nature can come only from Miſs Melville.

Mrs. Canvas. Well, if you are inclined to profit by the preſent opportunity, I need not apologize to either for leaving you to an agreeable tête-a-tête.

Sterling. I am all ſubmiſſion to Miſs Melville's time and leiſure

Fanny. I am perfectly at leiſure now, Sir; but we need not loſe the pleaſure of Mrs. Canvas's preſence.

Mrs. Canvas. I have a little buſineſs for a few moments, my dear; whilſt I execute that, you can employ yours in obliging Colonel Sterling.—— [*Aſide.*] I leave them together; if he does not take advantage of the occaſion, 'tis his fault (*Exit.*

Sterling. (*Aſide. Fanny going to the deſk, and taking out his picture.*) I am more and more captivated—and could ſtand motionleſs for ever looking

ing at her.---What expreſſion of innocence and ſimplicity!

Fanny. (Placing a chair, and going afterwards to her own.) Colonel, you'll be ſeated. *(Sits down.)* Do you uſually ſit very quiet to the painter, Sir.

Sterling. Oh, Madam, the moſt ſteady and compoſed creature that ever was: my body fixed in one conſtant attitude, and my eyes, like the needle, true to attraction, never varying from the point.

[Looking tenderly at her.

Fanny. Then you'll turn them from me, if you pleaſe, and move both your head and your body a little.

Sterling. (Drawing his chair towards her.)—What ſo, Madam.

Fanny. No, not ſo indeed, Sir; keep at a proper diſtance, or I ſhall ſee you in a bad light.

Sterling. In a bad light, Madam!

Fanny. Yes, Sir, your change of poſition reflects an unfavourable ſhade on your features, and I cannot diſtinguiſh their true expreſſion.

Sterling. (Drawing his chair nearer, and looking tenderly at her.) Oh then, Madam, you ſhall have a nearer view of them.

Fanny. Worſe and worſe—I muſt check your advances, Colonel—you muſt retreat.

Sterling. Retreat!—a moſt heart-breaking manœuvre for a Britiſh ſubject, either from the face of an enemy, or the preſence of a lady.

(Drawing back his chair with great difficulty.

Fanny. A little more—ſtill—encore.

Sterling. Pſhaw--- *(Fretfully.)* I believe I am right now. *(Looking at her.*

Fanny. Your eyes that way, Sir; and your head and body turned a little. I fancy you forget that Mr. Canvas meant a true profile.

Sterling.

Sterling. (Aſide.) Aye, hang him! why didn't he take my full face.---I am ſure I am exactly right now.

(His head and body turned a little, his eyes ſtill on her.

Fanny. Your eyes! Oh, Colonel, your eyes! *(He turns them a little. She begins to paint. Aſide.)* What's the matter with me?---how my hand trembles!

Sterling. (His eyes ſtill ſquinting towards her.) What an elegant accompliſhment painting is, Miſs Melville.

Fanny. 'Tis an agreeable amuſement, Colonel. *(Turns his head, gradually approaching again with his chair.)* More the other way, Sir.

Sterling. (Aſide.) Was ever man ſo tantalized! The fineſt object in nature in view, and forbidden to look at it! How delightful, Madam, for two lovers *(Turning a little.)* to catch the images of each other. *(Turning full towards her.*

Fanny. You'll try my patience, Colonel, you neglect your poſition ſo. Are theſe your fixed attitudes, and your motionleſs eyes?

Sterling. (Turning on the contrary ſide.) Bleſs me, I had forgotten.

Fanny. (Aſide.) Oh! this trembling hand! I have made a fright of the picture.

Sterling. (Turning on the wrong ſide; his eyes ſtill ſquinting towards her, and advancing with his chair.) To have her virtues painted on the mind, and the pencil repreſenting the perſon---to preſs the dear ſelf-created ſhade to one's boſom---To———

Fanny. Why, Colonel, one may as well catch the wind as your features: inſtead of being as true as the needle, you are as changeable as the weathercock. I---I---I hope you are not ſo in love. *(In great confuſion.*

Sterling.

Sterling. *(His chair drawn close to hers.)* I--- in love, Madam?

Fanny. You forget, Sir; you have turned your face on the wrong side, and have drawn your chair close to my own.

Sterling. *(Getting up.)* Upon my soul, Madam, I cannot fix my features in profile to-day. I'll take some other opportunity.

Fanny. *(Getting up.)* It requires but little more, Sir; and I fancy I have such an impression of your features that I shall be able to finish it without troubling you more.

Sterling. Don't you think there's more expression in my face with my eyes fixed on the painter? *(Looking tenderly on her.)* Don't they speak more and express the thoughts of my mind?

Fanny. They are very expressive indeed, Colonel.

Sterling. Could you not indulge me, Madam, in taking a likeness that way?

Fanny. I shall certainly think myself not ill employed in any thing that can innocently amuse myself, or oblige Colonel Sterling.

Sterling. Amiable condescension! —— I will not intrude farther on your time at present, Madam, but impatiently await another opportunity of improving my acquaintance with so much loveliness.

(Exit slowly, and looking tenderly at her.

Fanny. Lie still my heart.—What strange emotions are these that agitate you? It beats as if 'twould burst! Does his presence or absence depress or exalt my spirits so? No, no, it is not he—All amiable as he is, so short an acquaintance

cannot have made ſuch an impreſſion on me. It is ſome flurry. I will retire to my chamber and compoſe myſelf.

[*Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Drawing Room in Lady Ludgate's *Houſe.*

Lady LUDGATE *and* EMILY.

Lady Ludgate.

I TELL you, Emily, it muſt be a man of quality: I will have no body enter my family that has not ſupporters to his arms at leaſt.

Emily. Conſider, you yourſelf married a commoner, Madam.

Lady Ludgate. I married a commoner, Miſs?—Was not Sir Lovemoney Ludgate my Lord when I married him, and a Privy Counſellor?

Emily. What, Lord Mayor? A title that's ſoon extinct.

Lady Ludgate. No matter; I ſatisfied the punctilios of my family, and, by his being knighted, have enjoyed the dignity of title ever ſince. Am I not your ladyſhip, as well as the firſt counteſs in the kingdom? However, once for all, Emily, no man ſhall ever plead a title to you till he brings one with him.

Emily. Alas! poor Racket then.

Lady Ludgate. Poor Racket, indeed: but I have ſomething to tell you, Emily—you muſt for-

get this baſe, ignoble lover to make room for a better. Sir Figure Finance has made propoſals for his nephew, the accompliſhed Colonel Sterling, who will have both title and fortune; and I inſiſt on your obedience.

Emily. But you made me give hopes, Madam, to Mr. Racket.

Lady Ludgate. Then I will now give you free leave to deſtroy them.

Emily. 'Tis no longer in my power, my lady. You bent the twig to your purpoſe, and you cannot expect the tree to grow ſtraight again.

Lady Ludgate. Yes I do, I expect to twiſt and twine it as I pleaſe.

Emily. (Aſide.) I believe you won't though.

Enter Servant, *introducing* RACKET.

Servant. Mr. Racket, my lady. *(Exit* Serv.

Racket. (To Lady Ludgate.*)* Your ladyſhip's moſt obedient. (*To* Emily.) Your moſt devoted. *(Both ladies courteſying formally.)* Hey-day! The old one ſulky *(Aſide.)* and the young one dumb. Ladies—I'll take another occaſion. *(Going.*

Lady Ludgate. Stay, Mr. Racket. The candour with which I have always treated you, induces me to tell you, that I can no longer admit of your attentions to that lady.

Racket. You ſurpriſe me, Madam; what fault of mine?

Lady Ludgate. No particular one, Sir; but the conſtant and inſuperable objection of your want of title---Plain Charles Racket can never be united to Emily Ludgate.---Mrs. Racket! Oh, hideous ſimplicity of ſound! The very ſpectres of

of my noble anceſtry would riſe up from their graves and accuſe me of ruin to their race!

Emily. I think it very cruel, Madam, that theſe dead relations ſhould plead ſo forcibly againſt the only living one you have left.

Racket. Againſt ſuch animated fleſh and blood! Beſides, my lady, when your family left their country they deſerted its cuſtoms; and what might be conſidered as ſtrict propriety there, will be regarded as ridiculous vanity here.

Lady Ludgate. I am not to be taught propriety by you, Sir, in any climate.---If you mean to viſit in this houſe, you will be received as a common acquaintance---no farther.

Enter NOUVELLE.

Nouvelle. Lady Ludgate, your moſt humble ſervant—Mademoiſelle, yours. Mr. Racket, I am glad to ſee you alive: how d'ye do?

Racket. (Aſide.) Now ſhall we have more lies than in all the morning and evening papers.

Lady Ludgate. Have you any news, Mr. Nouvelle.

Nouvelle. None, my lady, none---the town's as ſterile as an old maid paſt her grand climacteric. ---Though, gad, my lady, I forget, too——

Racket. (Aſide.) Aye, now it comes.---Emily, whilſt he amuſes your mother with his nonſenſe, let me know the real cauſe of my diſgrace.

(Takes Emily *to one ſide of the ſtage.*

Lady Ludgate. Well, Mr. Nouvelle, what is it?

Nouvelle. Why I muſt give you joy, my lady; they ſay you have an humble ſervant in Sir Figure Finance; and that Miſs Emily is to ſtrengthen the

the family compact, by receiving his nephew in the capacity of a huſband.

Lady Ludgate. Really!

Nouvelle. 'Tis ſaid for certain, that the preliminaries are ſigned and ſealed, and the contracting parties have only to join hand in hand to give peace and happineſs to themſelves, and deſpair to all the reſt of the world.

Racket. (To Emily *apart.)* Sterling is my moſt intimate acquaintance, and in friendſhip holds the firſt place in my heart.

Nouvelle. Your ladyſhip does not deny it either.

Lady Ludgate. No, I do not, Mr. Nouvelle, becauſe part of it may be true.

Nouvelle. Then you are really going to give a helping hand to the ſupport of the nation. Gad, Sir Figure's a bold man to venture on two ſuch fine ladies at once, who make ſuch a conſpicuous figure in the politics of Europe and the circle of bon ton—Britannia and your ladyſhip. You will ſtill permit me the honour of being of your cabinet, and, for any ſecret ſervice, I am your ladyſhip's moſt devoted.

Lady Ludgate. Yes, Mr. Nouvelle, when I am miniſter behind the curtain, you ſhall publiſh the Female Gazette Extraordinary.

Nouvelle. We'll have none of your dry truths, like a ſerious London Gazette; but take pattern from Paris, and flouriſh in a little fiction.

Racket. I can bear no rival near the throne.—*(Taking* Emily's *hand)* I muſt come to an explanation with Sterling.

Emily. I inſiſt then you do it with temper---Tell him our engagement; if he be the man of honour and friend you take him for, it will certainly have a proper effect; if not, I will ſo far be

my

my own miſtreſs as to reject every overture from him.

Enter FORMAL.

Formal. (Very ſtiff and formal.) My lady, your ladyſhip's moſt humble ſlave. Where's Miſs Emily? *(She comes forward.)* Madam, I kiſs your hand.

Emily. (Aſide.) Formal coxcomb.

Racket. (Aſide.) I find the drawing room's filling; ſo I may as well take my leave of the levee, now my audience is over.

(Exit unſeen to all but Emily, *to whom he kiſſes his hand.*

Formal. I thought I ſaw Mr. Racket here.

Nouvelle. Ha, ha, ha, poor Racket! the town has got it that he has hanged himſelf in his garters, and the milliners have already the willow-green Racket ribband ſtreaming at their windows.

Formal. Mr. Racket is certainly very volatile and flighty, and I ſhould not wonder were he to break his neck in a hurry; though I think he has not fortitude enough for deliberate ſuicide.

Emily. No, Mr. Formal, it requires all your gloomy wiſdom to be capable of ſo noble an act.

Lady Ludgate I wiſh, my dear, Mr. Racket, for his own ſake, would take example from the deportment and becoming geſture of Mr. Formal.

Formal. (Bowing very ſtiffly.) Your ladyſhip's too good.

Emily. So are you, Mr. Formal. Would you have, my lady, a creature whom God has endued with life and ſpirit ſet up for an automaton, with a motion

motion of clock-work, or bandaged up like a figure that has been a thouſand years a mummy.

(*Diſplaying* Formal's *figure.*

Nouvelle. Ha, ha, ha.

Formal. (*Aſide.*) The grin of that fool hurts me more than her tongue.

Enter Mrs. CANVAS *in a hurry.*

Mrs. Canvas. I hope I have not detained the company?—No, I ſee there's enough for a party without me.—Come, let us go in to cards.

(*Hurrying them off.*

Emily. Cards muſt be a great amuſement to you, Mrs. Canvas. (*Aſide.*) But I don't wonder at it, for ſhe always contrives to win.

Mrs. Canvas. Amuſement, my dear! What's life without cards! Come, we are loſing the precious moment—allons. (*Going off.*

Nouvelle Gad ſo, Mrs. Canvas, I hear you have a blooming relation come to town, an orphan, and paints well; why ha'n't you introduced her to us?

Mrs. Canvas. A relation come to town! (*Aſide.*) Where did he get this—he has a ſpy in every houſe. What, Mr. Formal, you have been babbling about my pretty couſin?

Formal. Not I, indeed, Madam, a lady's ſecrets are ſacred in my boſom.

Mrs. Canvas. Well, never mind, I'll introduce her to our circle ſoon.

(*Hurrying them out. Exeunt omnes.*

SCENE

SCENE II.

Sterling's *Lodging.* STERLING *and* RACKET.

Sterling. Good day to you, Charles.

Racket. (Diſtantly.) Good day to you, Colonel.

Sterling. What brings you out ſo early?

Racket. I have been diſturbed all night by tormenting reflections, and you are the cauſe of them.

Sterling. I, Racket! I don't underſtand you.

Racket. [*Paſſionately.*] Indeed you are, Sir.

Sterling. Nay, this is too ſerious.—I am ignorant of any cauſe I have given you for offence—but a ſoldier's honour is too nice for further words. If you are injured, whatever violence it might do my friendſhip, I am ready for any honourable ecclairciſſement.

Racket. I neither doubt your friendſhip nor your courage, Colonel, but I have been touched in a very tender part.—The girl I had ſet my honourable affections on, is, I find, to be a ſacrifice to you.—[Sterling *ſtarts as alarmed.*] What! you ſtart, do you, Sir—but let me tell you, that the man who gets poſſeſſion of her perſon or heart muſt pierce through mine; and although you have the intereſt of Lady Ludgate, you will find it no eaſy matter to obtain the conſent of her daughter.

Sterling. [*Aſide.*] Thank Heaven, my Fanny's ſafe. Why look ye, Charles, I did not think you

were ſo hot and jealous a lover: for ſhame—for ſhame, jealous of your friend? put aſide a little of this ardency of your flame, and I'll anſwer you coolly.

Racket. You may take advantage of your coolneſs both in your love and courage, but I know neither.

Sterling. So much the worſe, Charles. Were I as intemperate as yourſelf, miſchief might enſue. But I am determined to keep my good humour, and to provoke you to the ſame, by ſmiling at your violence—ha, ha, ha.

Racket. Do not ſport with me, Sterling, nor urge my temper too far.—My heart's on the rack. There's no man I love ſo much as yourſelf; and none I could be ſo jealous of: I know your worth, and therefore feel my inferiority. Beſides, your nobility of birth gives you an advantage in the mother's opinion at leaſt.

Sterling. Be patient, then, Charles, and hear me. I am not ignorant that my uncle has been making ſome overtures of marriage for me; nor am I ignorant that the lady is amiable and rich; but on my honour, till you mentioned it, her name was an entire ſecret to me. As to your diffidence of your own worth, give me leave to tell you 'tis the partiality of friendſhip only that could make you ſo unjuſt to yourſelf. My advantage in birth is in being born a gentleman as you are; and if the mother is ſo ridiculous as to pay an abſurd preference to my claim of nobility, to ſet your heart at eaſe my friend, I promiſe you I will never ſee the one or the other.

Racket. Generous Sterling!

Sterling. Do not ſet it down as a ſacrifice to my friendſhip for you, though that motive ſimply would

would make me do the ſame; yet have I others equally forcible. I will confeſs to you, my friend, that I have ſeen a girl whoſe heart appears to have been formed as a partner for my own.

Racket. Aye, indeed! and where does this fly fair lie hid.

Sterling. I wlll open my heart to you, Racket. [*Going up to* Racket *and taking his hand.*] I called the other day on poor Canvas's widow, and there I ſaw—oh, ſuch innocence and ſimplicity.—

Racket. (Breaking from him in a loud laugh.) Ha, ha, ha—at Canvas's widow's.—Innocence and ſimplicity—ha, ha, ha, you aſtoniſh me.

Sterling. [*Paſſionately, with his hand on his ſword.*] You aſtoniſh me, Sir; ſurely you have no views there; if you have, Sir, I—

Racket. For ſhame, for ſhame, Colonel, how can you be jealous of your friend---come, come. I'll provoke you to good humour by laughing at your violence, ha, ha, ha.—Oh, how pleaſant it is to be provoked into good humour by ſmiling at one, ha, ha, ha!

Sterling. (Frowning at firſt, then turning to good humour.) Forgive me Charles, I feel your retort, and find nature the ſame in us all.—But my friend, *(Going up to* Racket *timidly and confuſed.)* Surely you can—you muſt—you have no views on Mrs. Canvas

Racket. On Mrs. Canvas! Heaven forbid! nor you either, I hope.

Sterling. No, no, not on Mrs. Canvas, but on her innocence and ſimplicity. (*Aſide.*) curſe it, how he has confuſed me.

Racket. No, my friend, nor on her innocence and ſimplicity---they have long ago fled that manſion.

Sterling. How! is it poſſible! you are not ſerious.

Racket.

Racket. Take my word for it—but why do you appear ſo agitated? You are not ſerious in any thing you have ſeen there?

Sterling. Agitated! Oh, not at all—agitated—ſerious! quite the contrary, ha, ha, ha.

(Affecting to laugh.

Enter TRUSTY.

Truſty. Sir, Mr. Rouleau, would ſpeak to you.

Sterling. Bid him come up. (*Exit* Truſty.—(*Aſide.*) A happy relief, or I ſhould have expoſed myſelf to him.

Racket. I'll leave you, Colonel, you have buſineſs.

Sterling. None that need be a ſecret to you—only one of the neceſſary evils of life.

Enter ROULEAU.

Racket. Heh! Billy Brief, is it you! I thought, Billy, you had confined your 50 per cent. favours to the needy ones of the Temple, and not extended them to the nobility and army beyond Charing Croſs.

Sterling. What, you know Mr. Rouleau, the broker.

Racket. Mr. Rouleau the broker? Why this is Billy Brief, old Special the Attorney's clerk of the Temple: what, have you changed your name and profeſſion then Billy.

Rouleau. Why, Mr. Racket, I found the money buſineſs increaſe, and moſt profitable; ſo I thought I might as well oblige the ſuperior world with a taſte of my talents, as to confine them to the mediocrity of the Temple beaux.

Racket.

Racket. Right, Billy, a proper ambition; and ſo you have been obliging Colonel Sterling with an exertion of them.

Sterling. Yes, he has been endeavouring to help me out with my fortune before I come in poſſeſſion of it.

Rouleau. But I am afraid I can be of no further aſſiſtance in the ſame way, Colonel.

Racket. Why ſo, Billy Brief; I beg pardon—Mr. Rouleau.

Rouleau. The Colonel, they ſay, is too far gone without ſecurity to ſupport him. Mr. Racket, Colonel would do, if he would join.

Racket. With pleaſure.

Sterling. Charles, pardon me—it cannot be.

Racket. But I inſiſt on't, as I ſhall want your help in the ſame neceſſity.

Sterling. On that proviſo, I ſubmit.

Racket. Content.—And now, Billy, bring your friend to that number in St. James's-ſtreet, *(Giving him a card)* but don't mention my name till we meet. The Colonel and I will be ready there to treat, and if he likes his party, ſtrike the bargain. Come, Billy, you and I will now ſtroll to the Temple. *(Exeunt* Racket *and* Rouleau.

Sterling. What Racket tells me touches me ſorely. 'Tis ten to one, then, that this divine creature whom I took for an angel in the figure and form of innocencc and virtue, is a falſe repreſentation, and like her pictures, only the ſhade, not the ſubſtance. Impoſſible, I could not have been ſo deceived. She has made ſuch an impreſſion on me, that I cannot believe it. I will, however, know the truth, and ſet my heart at eaſe.

Exit.

SCENE

SCENE III.

Alderman Stocks's *Houſe.* *Lady* LUDGATE *and* STOCKS.

Lady Ludgate. Mr. Alderman, I cannot break my word——'twould be a diſgrace to my nobility.

Stocks. Then why did your Ladyſhip give me hopes that my boy ſhould be the happy man? I may claim a priority of promiſe.

Lady Ludgate. You know I never could promiſe Mr. Alderman, that want of title is like a bar in baſtardy, and except your plebeian blood were waſhed out by eight deſcents of nobility on both ſides, I don't think I could ſully the purity of my anceſtor's by admitting your ſon into my family—Oh, Mr. Stocks! were you to ſee the quarterings of the arms of my progenitors, male and female, for centuries back. Emperors, kings, electors, princes, dukes, marquiſſes, counts, earls, viſcounts barons.---'Twould ſhame your whole Britiſh peerage.

Stocks. But had they money to ſupport their nobility?

Lady Ludgate. *(Contemptuouſly.)* Money to ſupport their nobility, Sir! Why do you think money a ſupport to nobility?

Stocks.

Stocks. A very good one, and pleaſe your ladyſhip. What ſo good a prop to a decayed houſe as a Rouleau of guineas? what ſuch firm ſupporters to a coat of arms, as a bag of money on each ſide? —Zooks! heraldry itſelf could do nothing without a ground of ore or argent.

Lady Ludgate. Nonſenſe, nonſenſe, Mr. Alderman! Nobleſſe ſupport themſelves without.

Stocks. Do they, my Lady?—Then it is an art our peers do not underſtand; many of whom have travelled too after knowledge, but I never heard yet that any one ever returned with ſo valuable an endowment.

Lady Ludgate. Your countrymen have been obliged to a part of the Continent for ſome good things too, Mr. Alderman.

Stocks. I do confeſs it, my lady, ſo will all the nation, for an illuſtrious line who have long been the firm ſupporters and guardians of our liberties.

Lady Ludgate. Yes, Mr. Stocks; and though laſt, not leaſt, for a recent acquiſition of domeſtic happineſs to a prince, who is the pride of the people, and the fond boaſt of Britain;—but I muſt take my leave, Sir; I am to meet Sir Figure Finance, with the Earl Marſhall, to ſettle his nephew's pretentions.

Stocks. But, my lady, depending on the expectations you gave me, and according to your advice, I have purchaſed a foreign barony and ribbon for my ſon.—Here, Ledger, bring the letters patent and the ſtar.

Ledger. (Within.) Yes, Sir. [*Enter* Ledger, *with a box containing the letters patent, ſtar, and ribbon.*]

Stocks.

Stocks. Here they are, my lady, and very pretty, I aſſure you,—enough to put the Bath to the bluſh, or the intripid St. Patrick himſelf. Here he is. *(Shewing the letters patent.)* Lord of the devil knows how many counties, with names too hard to read, and theſe pretty things from the Grand Chancellor of the order, who moves round the world like a planet, and carries the belts and ſatellites about him.

Lady Ludgate. Oh, theſe are ſomething, Mr. Alderman!—I heartily congratulate your ſon on his acceſſion to a coronet and ribbon; and if any accident between Sir Figure Finance and myſelf, I ſhall think it poſſible that Mr. Racket may have a diſpenſation for ſeven quarterings on each ſide, and be received into my family. [*Exit.*

Stocks. Here, Ledger; place theſe in the archives of our family 'till ſome ſplendid occaſion ſhall ſummons them forth. [*Exit* Ledger.

Enter BRIM.

Brim. Friend Stocks, how fares it with thee to day?

Stocks. Ah, friend Brim, how dos't do.—What news on 'Change.

Brim. I come not from thence, friend, but from friend Sterling the ſoldier, on the wicked ſide of the bar, who demandeth more money of thee.

Stocks. More money! No, no. I have ventured enough already on a Chancery ſuit, or a court marſhall.

Brim. But the ſoldier has provided a ſecurity.

Stocks.

Stocks. Who is he?—What's his name?

Brim. That I am forbidden to impart to thee—but thou mayeſt ſatisfy thyſelf by going to that number *(giving him the card)* in the ſtreet called by the profane that of St. James's.

Stocks. A ſecurity in St. James's Street!—I ſhould as ſoon look for one in the confines of the King's Bench.—No, friend, the ſtreet, and all that inhabit it, have been mortgaged for theſe centuries back. However, you ſay I may ſpeak to the parties—there's no harm in that, ſo I'll even try them; and as I am going to that end of the town, I'll juſt ſmarten my dreſs a little, and will call.

Brim. Friend Stocks, I will meet thee there.

Stocks. Look ye, friend Brim, as I am but young in the buſineſs, it would be a good ſcheme to ſham deaf.—It ſtops a great many impertinences they tell me, and makes impatient young men more ready to come into terms.

Brim. (Lifting up his eyes and groaning.) Oh, the wiles of the wicked!—But, friend Stocks, dos't thee conſider the deadly ſin of diſſimulation and counterfeit; yea, verily, the ſin of deceit is deadly.

Stocks. What, moralizing, friend Brim—never mind—I am to anſwer for that, except you'll ſtand my ſecurity, and take the ſin on your own ſhoulders.

Brim. Nay, friend Stocks, I have enough of my own to anſwer for, without engaging for thoſe of my neighbour.

Stocks. I believe ſo, friend—we are all pretty well indebted there, and the worſe on't is, there's

no ſuch thing as putting off that day of payment.

Brim. Fare thee well, friend Stocks. [*Exit.*

Stocks. Adieu, friend Brim.—More money for Sterling!—I have already advanced a round ſum there, becauſe I have heard Charles ſpeak of him as his friend, and a man of merit, and a convenience of this kind might have kept him from worſe hands—but in advancing more ſhall I not encourage extravagance? As the former buſineſs was tranſacted by my attorney, and he does not know me, I will now call on him myſelf, and feign the cant of uſury, that I may finally cheer him, if his wants be real, with the true ſervices of friendſhip. Theſe are little allowable deluſions that in the charity of Heaven will bear the effect of truth. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

The Painting Room. FANNY *and* STERLING.

Fanny. (At the deſk, with the copy of Sterling's *picture in a caſe, and the original at her boſom)* Surely this little artifice cannot be deemed a crime. The copy is ſo near the original that the moſt diſcerning eye cannot perceive a diſtinction. *(Comparing the two pictures together.)* This ſhall be at his diſpoſal. *(Looking at the one in the caſe.)* But thee, dear original, *(looking at the other at her boſom)* that dids't firſt attract my attention, I cannot—muſt not

not part with pendent next my heart. Thine ear ſhall liſten to the tenderneſs that whiſpers thee within.

Sterling. *(Entering gently through a door left open in the front ſcene.)* No ſtranger to the apartments of this houſe, I have gently crept hither. Ah! there ſhe ſits!—Can virtue appear in a form more lovely—in nature more divine. Oh, ſhe is innonocence itſelf!—Huſh!—ſhe ſpeaks.

Fanny. And thou, dear wanderer! art doomed, perhaps, to grace the boſom of ſome more favoured maid. Tell—oh tell thy maſter, ſhe may be more fortunate, but cannot be more fond. *(Preſſing the picture to her lips, her elbow leaning in a melancholy poſture on the deſk ſupporting her head.)*

Sterling. Ah! ſhe preſſes to her lips the picture of ſome happy rival—and drops a tear too.—My friend is right—ſhe's Virtue's ſemblance only. I will ſee who it is, and then ſhame her to her face. *(Goes up gently, looking over her ſhoulder on the picture.)* Heh!—proud Fortune! 'tis myſelf. *(Retreating a little.)* Racket is totally deceived—I thought I could not be miſtaken—but how ſhall I break my intruſion to her without alarm?

(Goes to the door and knocks gently.

Fanny. *(Shutting up the picture haſtily, and putting it amongſt ſome others on the deſk, turns round.)* Oh, Colonel! is it you?—I, I, I beg pardon.

Sterling. That's a favour I ſhould claim from you, Madam, for thus abruptly intruding again on your retirement.

Fanny. Oh, not at all, Sir—your preſence is rather opportune—I had juſt put your miniature into its caſe, and meant to have ſent it

home, (*going to the deſk and taking up one of the pictures*) but I can now more ſafely leave it in your own poſſeſſion.

(*Dropping it reluctantly into his hand.*

Sterling. [*Aſide.*] How eaſily ſhe parts with it. If Miſs Melville would condeſcend to keep it in her own poſſeſſion, there is none I could be half ſo vain of. (*Preſenting it again to her.*

Fanny. The condeſcenſion is on your part, Colonel, and I ſcarce reſiſt its flattery, but that I already wear the miniature of a gentleman at my boſom, which I value, if poſſible, beyond the eſteem I bear to this. (*Returning the picture.*

Sterling. (*Aſide.*) The miniature of a gentleman at her boſom.—Oh, 'tis clear then Racket is right.—She has a thouſand others in the ſame ſituation—Confuſion! With what confidence ſhe owns it too. Madam, I—a—l—I didn't wiſh to impoſe the picture on your acceptance—and—a—care as little for your art as you do for my perſon.

[*Throwing the picture paſſionately on the ground.*

Fanny. Bleſs me, Sir, what can provoke this ill-mannered violence? I took you for the gentle Colonel Sterling.

Sterling. I took you, Madam, for the innocent, virtuous Miſs Melville.

Fanny. And from whence can the foul calumny ariſe that would diſpute my right to that pretenſion?

Sterling. Oh, Madam! when young ladies wear the pictures of gentlemen in their boſoms, the calumny is not far fetched that would diſpute a right to that pretenſion.

Fanny. The picture then, Sir, I thus tear from my

my boſom, and daſh it from me as I would an envenomed ſerpent. [*Throws it away.*

Sterling. (*Runs and takes up the picture.*) Ah! now I'll ſecure the knowledge of my rival. Powers above!—Heh!—why this is my own picture. (*Approaching* Fanny *again timidly.*) Miſs Melville—Miſs Melville—Madam—won't you look this way?—Why—why—this my likeneſs, Miſs Melville?

Fanny. It was your likeneſs, Sir, and I thought ſtrongly expreſſive of a nature gentle, noble, and generous; but theſe qualities ſeem now to dwell only in the painting.

Sterling. Confuſion!—how deſpicable has paſſion made——

Fanny. When you again condeſcend, Sir, to inſult an unprotected female, uſe not the unmanly means of an artleſs confeſſion to ruin her in her own opinion as well as yours. [*Going off in tears.*

Sterling. (*Struggling to detain her.*) You ſhall not leave me, Miſs Melville.—Thus, on my knees, I entreat your pardon; nor will riſe again till I obtain it.

Fanny. Forbear, Sir.

(*Inclining to return, yet timid.*

Sterling. Never!—never!—can you not? (*Catching her hand, and gently forcing her back.*) Will you not, Miſs Melville?

Fanny. (*Aſide.*) How unable am I to reſiſt—'tis impoſſible.

Sterling. Forgive a paſſion of which tenderneſs to yourſelf was the cauſe.

Fanny. (*Returning.*) Riſe, Sir, and if ſuch be the pretence, let it henceforth take a more generous courſe than to reflect diſhonour to yourſelf, and

and injury on the feelings of a wretched orphan.

(In tears.

Sterling, Hah! her tears pierce me to the ſoul. —Oh, never will I offend again.—Let this picture be ſurety for me. *(Preſſing his picture into her hand, which ſhe at firſt ſtarts at, and declines.)* Nay, do not refuſe—I ſhall think my pardon inſecure till you reſtore this mediator to your boſom.

Fanny. (Taking it—Aſide.) Ah! my fooliſh heart.

Sterling. (Taking up the picture which he had thrown down.) And this poor inſulted ſhade, charmed by your art into a monitor, ſhall correct my paſſions, and keep nature tranquil. *(Opening the caſe, and looking on the picture, ſtarts.)*—Heavens! your own charms are here, Miſs Melville—Oh, what a profanation! vile hand—thus to caſt ſuch a jewel from thee—it is your perfect likeneſs.

Fanny. (In ſurpriſe.) My likeneſs, Sir?

Sterling. (Shewing her the picture.) Yes, Madam, can my eyes miſtake the reſemblance.

Fanny. (*Confuſed.*) I—I—I have miſtaken the picture, Sir, and taken a wrong one. (*Going to the deſk and taking his picture.*) This is your miniature, Colonel.

Sterling. Pardon me, Madam, this is now mine —and no power on earth ſhall ever tear it from me.

[*Kiſſing it rapturouſly, and exit.*

Fanny. Gone with my own picture.—Heavens! what imprudence have I been guilty of!—Surely he will make no unworthy uſe of it!—Oh that my dear guardian friend were returned!—I have none here to conſult and confide in. There is

ſomething

ſomething in Mrs. Canvas that I do not like. Alas! my own ſilly heart, I cannot truſt!—Whoſe then will be true to me? To the power that protects innocence I can alone refer my cauſe.

Exit.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT

ACT III. SCENE I.

Racket's *Chambers in the Temple.—A large Book-caſe; on one ſide Books, on the other the Titles of Books lettered on Wood, to look like the reality, but opening ſhews within a Wardrobe, and a Number of rich Suits of Cloaths.*

RACKET, CURL, *and* STOCKS.

Racket. (*Elegantly dreſſed, ſeen at a Table filled with Books.*)

THE old Jew that was to call here to negotiate theſe bills ſtays late. Let me ſee what's o'clock. Gad, 'tis almoſt time to meet for Sterling's buſineſs at my houſe in St. James's. Let me conſider—right, faith—my brother tells me that this negotiator is out of my beat, and does not know my perſon; ſo I'll e'en make convenient Curl counterfeit his maſter. (*Rings the bell.—Enter* Curl.) Come hither, ſirrah! Here are notes for five hundred pounds—an old Jew will be here preſently to bring me money for them—you muſt perſonate me, as I am going out, and receive the caſh.

Curl. Oh yes, Sir, I'll receive the caſh, by all means.

Racket.

Racket. (*Giving* Curl *the notes.*) Here take 'em. He is to have a hundred pounds for his pains, and I'll pay thee liberally for thine. [*Exit.*

Curl. But am I on the right ſide of the law? An't I liable to feel it in my throat for uttering another's name? Never mind—"Neck or nothing." But if I am to be Charles Racket, Eſq. I may as well look more like myſelf, and put on a ſuit of his cloaths. He didn't mean I ſhould repreſent him in livery. (*Opens the bookcaſe and takes out a ſuit, which he puts on.*) Aye, now indeed! and now, friend Racket, I'll treat thee to a bottle or two of the beſt (*takes from a cupboard two or three bottles*) hock! juſt the right milk for the new-born ſon of an Alderman; (*ſits down and drinks*) right good i' faith--although I am exalted in the corporation, yet I'll not forget my own company.—Here's to the ſmart Liverymen of the city of Weſtminſter, (*drinks*) powdered or not powdered —again and again—(*drinks frequently.*) Now I am in a right trim for a frolic, and feel myſelf as much a gentleman as my maſter. (*Sits eaſily in the chair.—A knocking at the door.*) Come in. (*Affectedly with his back to the door.—Enter* Stocks, *handſomely dreſſed in modern faſhion.*) Sir, your humble ſervant. (*Turning his head a little.*)

Stocks. I beg pardon—I thought theſe had been Charles Racket's Chambers.

Curl. (*Getting up.*) At your ſervice, Sir.

Stocks. Is the gentleman at home pray?

Curl. You have the pleaſure of ſeeing him, Sir.

Stocks. (*Looking about.*) Where, friend?

Curl. In your humble ſervant, Sir; I am Charles Racket, Eſq.

Stocks. (Aſide.) Mercy on us!—how he is changed then! What, ſon of Samuel Stocks, Citizen and Alderman?

Curl. His very begotton, if there be any truth in my mother's virtue, or my father's features. Had you known the ſire, you muſt have recognized the ſon, from the ſtrong reſemblance.

Stocks. I cant't ſay it ſtrikes me.

Curl. Why certainly there is more ſweetneſs of expreſſion ſparkling in my eye, (*very affectedly*) a ſofter ſenſibility ſuffuſing my cheek, a more delicate grace of good nature ſporting on my lip: his is more of a crab-apple countenance.

Stocks. A crab-apple countenance! I have always heard it was a plain, honeſt face.

Curl. Oh, plain enough! but a deviliſh deal of arch-roguery in it—a deep daſh of that old-faſhioned, father-like knavery that puts your modern honeſt ſons to the bluſh.

Stocks. (Aſide.) It does not ſeem to have that effect upon you, my modeſt boy. A very pleaſant ſketch of your parent's perſon, Sir; are his morals as amiable?

Curl. Quite congenial with his phiz, Sir; a moſt wicked dog with the women; and whilſt he reſtricts his poor boy to one ſolitary wench, keeps ten tight girls of his own.

Stocks. Ha, ha, ha, ten tight girls! Zooks—why you make a Mahometan of him.

Curl. Ha, ha, ha.— Yes, the Turkey Company have dubbed him Grand Signior of the city; and his brother Aldermen, by a little ellipſis of language, call him the ten-tail'd Magiſtrate of Baſhaw ward.

Stocks.

Stocks. (*Laughing very heartily.*) Upon—upon—upon my life, I never heard before that the honourable court were ſo witty, or ſo prone to the humours of amorous raillery.

Curl. Oh, moſt gay gallants in the pleaſures of imagination, and dear lovers of a dry joke. But pray, Sir, be ſeated. (*Sitting down.*) I'll take another opportunity of giving the finiſhing touch to my papa's portrait.

Stocks. The deſcriptive powers of your pencil have done ample juſtice to the original, Sir.—Grand Signior of the city!

(*Laughing very heartily.*

Curl. (*Humouring his laugh.*) I am quite happy, Sir, to ſee you ſo pleaſed.—Since you are ſo amuſed by the Court of Aldermen, ſuppoſe we drink the worthy Lord Mayor. (*Putting the bottle to* Stocks.)

Stocks. Excuſe me, Sir, I am myſelf a true Muſſulman, and never drink wine of a morning.

Curl. What—not the Lord Mayor!—then you are neither an honeſt fellow nor a good citizen—and I'll bumper him morning, noon, and night. This law is a dry ſtudy, Sir.

(*Drinking frequently.*

Stocks. So it ſeems, for it makes you pretty thirſty.

Curl. Yes, Sir, my thirſt of knowledge is inſatiable; for which reaſon I have ingeniouſly deviſed that one of the branches of the Rhine ſhould run in a current through my throat, (*drinking*) whilſt all the witty ſtreams of Burgundy and Champaign pour their rich ſtores in my body.

Stocks. You do, indeed, imbibe your knowledge at the fountain head.

Curl. (*Putting the bottle, hiccups, and begins to be drunk.*) Yes, I ſuck it in from its very ſource.

Stocks. And adopt the poet's caution by drinking deep.

Curl. (*Drunk.*) To have a thorough knowledge of things, you ſhould always go to the bottom of them. (*Emptying the bottle into the glaſs.*

Stocks. And yet, after all, it is empty knowledge.

Curl. Very eaſily loſt, indeed, when put into brittle veſſels. (*The glaſs falling with the wine on the ground.*) But come, Sir, here are drafts that, perhaps, you reliſh better than thoſe of the Rhine, or the Muſe's fountain there—what do you call it—hyppo—hyppo—hyppo—honc—hoof.

(*Gives* Stocks *the notes, and hiccups.*

Stocks. What have we here?—I promiſe to pay, &c. &c. Charles Racket. (*Aſide.*) 'Tis his own hand. He has not murdered Charles, ſurely.

Curl. What are you muttering, old cock?—See what a ſecurity you have for your money—all the rich treaſures within here, (*tumbling over the books.*) and ſuch a golden endorſement without. (*Shewing the gilt letters.*) I ſupprize you, friend.

(*Hiccuping, and ſlapping* Stocks *familiarly on the back.*

Stocks. (*Starting.*) Rather alarm me, indeed, friend.

Curl. Then I'll do ſo a little more. (*Getting up, making* Stocks *do the ſame, and dragging him to the bookcaſe.*) Don't be afraid, you old fool!—Well, what think you of this? (*Opening the wardrobe ſide of the bookcaſe.*) Perhaps you don't prize literature, and deal more in old cloaths. There's a deception for

for you—expreſſed to the letter on the outſide, and ſuch a mine of gold lace within.

Stocks. Mercy! Heavens!

Curl. How the old fellow's aſtoniſhed. He's ſome old cloaths man, I ſee. Curſe theſe hiccups —I muſt allay the ſpirit of them at the mouth of the Rhine.

[*Returns to the bottle and puts it to his mouth, whilſt* Stocks, *in apparent reverie, ſees the livery coat lying at the bottom of the wardrobe.*

Stocks. He certainly is the ſervant in his maſter's cloaths. I ſee the livery at the bottom of the wardrobe. I'll know the truth.

Curl. (Wheeling Stocks *round.)* Come, come, the bills are endorſed, ſo down with the duſt.

Stocks. (Seizing him by the collar.) I'll endorſe your back with this ſtick, you raſcal, and knock you down in the duſt too, you dog, if you don't tell me the truth.

Curl. (Seizing Stocks *alſo by the collar, and bawling.)* Maſter!—Mr. Racket!—an ill-looking rogue of a Jew!—Battery! Aſſault! Murder! Treaſon! Rape!

Stocks. No noiſe, you ſcoundrel! let me know the truth, or I'll have you hanged for murdering my ſon Charles, and robbing him of his name.

Curl. (Letting go his hold of Stocks. *Aſide.)* Zounds, his father!—what hands have I fallen into.—What are you Mr. Alderman Stocks of crab-apple countenance? It cannot be, Sir—ſuch a ſweet civility of ſmile—ſuch a—

Stocks. Out, ſirrah! no fawning, but on with the truth.

Curl.

Curl. Well, Sir, I now ſee the truth of my own mother's honeſt obſervation, that it was a wiſe child who knew its own father—but, good Sir, ſpare your adopted baby, and I'll confeſs the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—ſo help me—*Hiccup.*

Stocks On then, ſirrah.

Curl. My otherſelf, Sir, your own legitimate fleſh and blood, Sir, told me to take on the relationſhip; that an old Jew would be here to give him four hundred pounds for thoſe bits of paper, and that I was to receive the money as himſelf, propriâ perſonâ. The whole truth, Sir—if there be any truth in wine, or truſt in your bleſſing.

(*Hiccups and kneels.*

Stocks. And am I like an old Jew, you ſcoundrel? (*Holding up his cane.*

Curl. Oh no, indeed, papa—of a face endued with all your ſon's ſenſibility, (*ſtroking his own face.*) of a moſt Chriſtian countenance, and forgiving features.

Stocks (*Letting him get up.*) Four hundred pounds for five hundred—a pretty diſcount at a ſhort date. Zookers, I'll diſinherit him.

Curl. Oh, pray do, dear daddy—cut off the unnatural dog with a ſhilling, and make me your own natural offſpring—your heir.

Stocks. Out, villain!—Now for my other appointment. (*Exit.*

Curl. So, Mr. Racket, you had near been cudgelled by your father, and ten to one you'll be turned out of doors by your nameſake. But he can't in conſcience blame me—when he gave me his name, 'twas his fault not to put on me his nature alſo, that I might have known my parent by inſtinct.

inſtinct. This comes of his thinking me always too ſmart for his city meſſages, ſo that I never ſaw his father. Off, you unlucky Gentility! and welcome becoming uniform. (*Putting on the livery.*) I'll put by my hock too, and ſober myſelf with a bottle or two of humble port in my own room.

[*Takes three or four other bottles, and Exit.*

SCENE II.

A Drawing Room, elegantly furniſhed.

STERLING, *ſolus.*

Sterling. This is an elegant houſe of Racket's. He'll be here preſently, I ſuppoſe. (*Enter* Brim.) Who comes here?

Brim. (*Pulling off his hat.*) You ſtart at the ſpirit, Colonel.

Sterling. What, Rouleau!—thou uſurious ſon of Proteus! how many changes haſt thou?

Brim. Billy Brief, the Attorney at the Temple—Rouleau, the Gentleman at St. James's—Brim, the Quaker in the City—and Solomon, the Jew in Mary-le-bone. Theſe are the four cardinal points of my counterfeit compaſs, and I fill up the ſub-diviſions with all trades and religions, juſt as the wind of convenience varies its points.

Sterling.

Sterling. In which point does the wind blow to-day then?

Brim. In our tête-a-tête, where you pleaſe, Colonel; but before our city friend you give me leave to put on my hat, and bargain as Brim. (*Putting on his hat. Enter* Stocks. Brim *going up, ſcarcely knowing him.*) Oh, here is my friend! (*Aſide.*) Gad, he's diſguiſed too! Friend Stocks, (*bawling in his ear.*) thou art a little after thy appointment.

Stocks. (*Aſide to* Brim.) Oh, you have not forgotten my deafneſs?—Yes, I am deep laden, and ſail ſlowly.

Sterling. I'll eaſe you of ſome of your freight, friend.

Stocks. Have you been abroad this war, Sir?

Sterling. Juſt returned from thence.

Stocks. (*Pretending not to hear.*) Umph?

Brim. (*Bawling.*) Juſt returned from abroad.

Stocks. Where's the other party?

Brim. He'll be here forthwith, friend.

Sterling. I wiſh he was come.

Stocks. What does he ſay?

Sterling. (*Impatiently.*) Nothing—nothing.

Stocks. Nothing! what, he'll give no premium.

Sterling. Yes, yes. Zounds! I'll do any thing. (*Very impatiently.*

Stocks. I muſt have the firſt year's intereſt down.

Sterling. Well, well, well.

Stocks. And the ſecurity's life in the bond.

Sterling. Conſcionable rogue!

Stocks. (*Taking* Brim *aſide.*) Does this houſe belong to him?

Brim. No, friend, to the ſecurity.

Stocks.

Stocks. (*Going with* Brim *to the other end of the ſtage; examining the furniture; their backs turned to the door.*) Pretty furniture. His own, are you ſure? No friendly Upholſterer to claim it as his?

Brim. No, no, all his, bonâ fide.

Sterling. (*Standing near the door.*) Oh! here Racket comes. [*Enter* Racket.

Racket. A thouſand pardons! I hope I have not detained you. But where's your uſurer?

Sterling. Yonder, examining the furniture and anticipating an execution, Charles. He's a moſt unconſcionable rogue; your life muſt be in the bond.

Racket. (*Softly.*) A vile raſcal!

Sterling. You needn't be afraid—he's as deaf as a ſtone.

Racket. And as hard hearted too—old rogue.

Stocks. They are abuſing me—extravagant rogues.

Racket. Who's that with him there?

Sterling. That's Billy Brief, or Rouleau, or Brim, or whom you pleaſe.

Racket. What, Billy in maſquerade again!

[Brim *ſtamps with his feet that* Stocks *ſhould not hear.*

Stocks. What's the matter, friend Brim? What ſpirit moveth thee now?

Brim. My foot that ſleepeth, friend Stocks.

Stocks. Zooks! it ſeems to be very much awake by its motion.

Racket. Let us finiſh the buſineſs and get rid of theſe fellows.

Sterling. The ſooner the better. (Racket *ſtands with his back to them.* Sterling *goes behind* Stocks, *bawling in his ear.*) Turn this way, old gentleman.

[*Swinging him round againſt* Racket—*they both turn with their faces cloſe to each other.*

Stocks. Whom have I ſtumbled on here? *(Starting back.)* My Son!

Racket. Zounds, Colonel! you have brought my father on my back.

Sterling. A moſt unfortunate ſurprize on the rear indeed, Charles.

Racket. He's going to draw on me at ſight for a fine ſum of abuſe.

Sterling. Proteſt the bill then for want of advice.

Racket. No, I'll pay him in his own coin, and turn a deaf ear to him.

Brim. Oh how my ſpirit weepeth for the wicked—loſs of my fees.

Stocks. Are you not aſhamed, ſirrah? have I been ſlaving for this to leave you a fortune?

Racket. (*Pretending to be deaf.*) Umph.

Stocks. Travelling to all parts of the globe to bring my ventures home, and then to ſink them on ſuch a bottom as this.

Racket. Umph.

Stocks. What, deaf are you?

Sterling. An hereditary weakneſs that runs in the family, Sir.

Stocks. *(Holding up his cane.)* Then I'll quicken one ſenſe by application to another.

Racket. Hold, Sir! I have ſenſe to feel.

Stocks. I am glad you have—borrow an extraordinary one—that of ſhame—and bluſh for your profligate extravagancy.

Racket. *(Aſide to* Sterling) Colonel, I ſhall be deaf and dumb too without you help me out.

Sterling. Why look ye, Mr. Alderman, 'tis true you have detected your ſon in a breach of prudence; but conſider the motive and you'll find

find more to commend than to blame. His friendſhip for me induced him to become a partner in this buſineſs.—The money was for my uſe. Had you been leſs hard to exact ſecurity, your ſon would have had no opportunity of appearing extravagant. He ſaw my wants, and generouſly pitied my diſtreſs—bred up in mutual habits of kindneſs, he muſt have had a heart harder than the uſurer's eye that ſees miſery unmelted, and not felt for mine.

Racket. [*Aſide.*] Brave Colonel! a ſpeech worthy of a peer.

Sterling. I am ſure I ſhould have acted exactly the ſame in his caſe.

Stocks. Good Sir, it is the privilege of your birth and profeſſion to diſſipate and deſtroy, but the ſon of a Citizen and a Lawyer ſhould know how to make money and to keep it.—I thought the fellow was all prudence.

Sterling. Prudence, Sir! didn't you obſerve his emotions on the terms of the loan?

Racket. Yes, Sir; didn't you obſerve that when I found my life was to be included in the bond—begging your pardon, not knowing, from your having thrown off the old banker brown, and aſſumed this gaiety of garb, who you were, or ſuppoſing you could hear I called you rogue.

Sterling. [*Aſide.*] Pay him with intereſt, Charles, and I'll ſtand by your ſide as collateral ſecurity.

Racket. Didn't I abuſe you, Sir, for debaſing the character of an Engliſh merchant, and turning uſurer—for truſting your name to ſuch a pander and jackall as that broker there?

Brim. [*Aſide.*] It's my turn to be deaf now.

Racket. You could have no motive for this but the baſe and ſordid one of gain. A motive of friendſhip led me to my fault—would yours were as noble, Sir.

Stocks. Very true, very juſt, Sir—and the exchange of the old barriſter black for this gaiety of garb, as you are pleaſed to term it, and this extravagant furniture—and a houſe in St. James's Street, for the uſe and entertainment, no doubt, of friendſhip—yes, and theſe Bills too—and your name and perſon lent from a motive of friendſhip to your ſervant——

Racket. (*Aſide.*) Zounds! how came he by them?

Sterling. (*To* Racket.) Comrade, the firm is run deviliſh hard here—I'm afraid we muſt ſtop payment.

Racket. Why, faith, partner, this demand is rather unexpected; however, you had better abſcond, and leave me to face the creditor—we ſhall compromiſe matters in private.

Sterling. Adieu then. (*Going—returns again.*) Charles, in the ſettlement of accounts, mind you don't forget to ſtate errors excepted; and he's a deviliſh hard-hearted father that, in an account current with youth, allows not a good-natured diſcount for a few of thoſe. [*Exit.*

Brim. Since the houſe is dividing, I may as well ſecond the principal's motion, and pair off.

[*Exit unſeen.*

Stocks. (*To* Racket, *who ſtands ſilent.*) Well, Mr. Philoſopher, what have you to ſay? What, a Lawyer abaſhed, and at a loſs for words! Zooks! this a rare caſe.

Racket.

Racket. Sir, I ſtand as a culprit confounded by my guilt, and truſt to the mercy of the judge.

Stocks. In one wardrobe, ſirrah, to have more ſuits of cloaths than there are dyes in the rainbow—becauſe you thought me an unlettered citizen, to impoſe wooden books on me—to have your ſervant ſit like a river god, with a current of wine running through his throat—and the whole court of Aldermen libelled as love-wits—your father too, at one time, exalted as a dimigod of the Divan—then humbled to a retailer of rags—an old Jew. What do you expect to come to? We ſhall have you like the true prodigal, reduced yourſelf to rags at laſt—and——

Racket. (*Going to embrace him.*) Like him too—meet a father ready to open his arms to repentance.

Stocks. (*Turning from him at firſt with a look of anger and repulſe.*) Hey! What! (*Then relaxing into kindneſs.*) Zooks! I cannot help it, his mother knocks ſo deviliſh hard here. Can I keep out my Anna's ſon!—impoſſible. Well, well—there, there. (*Embracing him.*

Racket. Beſt of fathers!

Stocks. Here, call in all theſe Jew bills—they bear a higher diſcount than aſſignats. Come, friend Brim, let us go. (*Looking about for* Brim.) Heyday! where's my little Quaker?

Racket. That raſcal's an Attorney's clerk.

Stocks. An Attorney's clerk? He paſſed upon me for a Quaker and a broker. Mercy on us! you are all deception here. Let me get home as faſt as I can, leſt I meet the devil himſelf.

(*Exeunt.*

SCENE

SCENE III.

Mrs. CANVAS's *Houſe.*

Mrs. CANVAS *and* FLIRT.

Mrs. Canvas. So, Flirt, have you ſtopped all the letters from my ſiſter in my abſence?

Flirt. No, Mem.

Mrs. Canvas. Didn't I give poſitive orders about them?

Flirt. Yes, Mem; but there was no occaſion to execute them—your ſiſter has been here herſelf, Mem.

Mrs. Canvas. No, ſurely not.

Flirt. Yes, poſitively: yes, Mem.

Mrs. Canvas. And how did you act?

Flirt. With as much impudence as I could, and ſhut the door in her face.

Mrs. Canvas. Very civil truly; and how do you think I muſt act?

Flirt. Why, ſupport your miniſter, or you'll get nobody to ſerve you. You gave me full powers, and I acted according to my diſcretion.

Mrs. Canvas. And my ſatisfaction, Flirt; but ſhe comes a little too ſoon for my ſchemes—Has any one called beſides?

Flirt.

Flirt. Formal, to groan out his pains; and Nouvelle, to publiſh his Evening Gazette, and collect hints for his morning paper. Here's the old ſaying verified—talk of—and pop—behold him. [*Exit* Flirt.

Enter Formal.

Formal. Where have you been this age, Mrs. Canvas?—oh, 'twas cruel to deprive us of the little warmth we enjoy from the fire of your eyes. If you and the ſun are both at a diſtance together, how are we poor mortals to exiſt.—But I feel a genial warmth thrilling through me *(relaxing a little from his ſtiffneſs)* at this ſhort enjoyment of ſunſhine.

Mrs. Canvas. I hope ſo, Mr. Formal; and that you are quickening into animation from this torpid ſtate of yours, and thawing your limbs. Come, come, behave as an inhabitant of this temperate zone.

Formal. Your beauty, Madam, has an effect on me that I feel in no other clime but your houſe *(relaxing a little from his ſtiffneſs, but ſeeing* Nouvelle *entering, ſtiffens again).* Zounds! what he here?

Nouvelle. Mrs. Canvas, I rejoice to ſee you—How could you run from us—Our parties have been inſipid without you—Cards loſt all their pleaſures—The tables were as thin as the playhouſes without a pantomime, or the Commons without a call of the houſe.

Mrs. Canvas. Surely!

Nouvelle. Some compared our commerce table to a Board of Trade without the Preſident, or the Treaſury Bench without the Chancellor of the Exchequer;

Exchequer; and many thouſands have been won and loſt in the alley about you.

Mrs. Canvas. Bleſs me! how ſo?

Nouvelle. Why it was rumoured that you were joined in commiſſion with Colonel Sterling to negotiate a peace with Madame Tallien and the moderés, and were ſet off for Paris. But, gad ſo, did you hear the real affair between Sterling and Racket?

Mrs. Canvas. No, what of them?

Nouvelle. Why, Sir Figure Finance had entered into a treaty with Lady Ludgate for a marriage between Miſs Emily and the Colonel, which my Lady herſelf told me was nearly brought to a concluſion.

Formal. Yes, my Lady told me as much.

Nouvelle. But attend to me, Mr. Formal. We all know what pretenſions Racket had there—getting intelligence of this contract, he challenges Sterling, and—

Formal. (interrupting him) I thought they were the beſt friends in the world.

Nouvelle. (paſſionately) But won't the beſt friends quarrel about a miſtreſs?

Mrs. Canvas. (eagerly) Yes, yes, Mr. Nouvelle, go on.

Nouvelle. They met. I ſaw Racket with two horſe piſtols peeping out of his pocket, and a cartouch box under his coat—in ſhort, they fired three rounds, two without hitting—but at the third, Racket dropped the Colonel, and got winged himſelf.

Mrs. Canvas. But is this truth, Mr. Nouvelle?

Nouvelle. If there be any in me, Madam. I was on the ground after the fray, and they were carrying

carrying Racket off at a diſtance, who would have murdered himſelf when he found he had killed his friend. But I have outſtaid my time—my moments are ſo precious, that if I could cut myſelf into atoms, and make each a living Mercury, I could find employment for them all. Madam, your humble ſervant. [*Exit in a hurry.*

Mrs. Canvas. (aſide) If this be true, can't I make ſomething of it—If he is gone, I have no more to expect there, and, if not—for Nouvelle's not to be too much truſted. Solomon tells me he can get him no more money—I may as well make ſure of Formal. Beſides, my ſiſter is in town, and I ſhan't be able to keep her. Its ſettled—I'll ſet Formal upon her, and, in the mean time, ſteal out, to know the truth of the duel from Racket.

Formal. You ſeem to be much concerned, dear Madam, at the news of this duel.

Mrs. Canvas. I am, indeed, Sir—Colonel Sterling was my very good friend.

Formal. (going up to her) You have a much better friend than Sterling left, Madam. Would I could venture on a term more expreſſive of the warmth of my affection for you.

(Amorouſly, and relaxing by degrees from his ſtiffneſs.

Mrs. Canvas. Oh no, Mr. Formal, I am now in the decline of years.

Formal. (taking her hand) Juſt in the ripeneſs of beauty.

Mrs. Canvas. (affectedly) Mrs. Autumn is the happy woman.

Formal. (relaxing from all his ſtiffneſs) Autumn! an old painted ſeaſon—no more to be compared with you than gloomy winter with jocund ſpring.

Mrs. Canvas. (coyly) Ah! I cannot truſt you! I told you the other day that I had ſomething like youth and beauty in the houſe—but you have forgotten.

Formal. Yes, my angel—your divine beauty would make me forget every other woman—come, my charmer, delay my hopes no longer.

(Forcing her to the ſide of the ſtage.

Mrs. Canvas. (puſhing him from her) Then, to be plain with you, Sir—however prodigal I may be of the favours of others, I am a miſer of my own, and can conceal the coldneſs of my conſtitution by a cloke, as well as you can the warmth of yours. Like the Spaniard though, we wear them for contradictory purpoſes, you to keep out the cold, I to keep off the heat: once a ſacrifice to love, I have now the beſt antidote to its poiſon—cold indifference; and another paſſion has taken poſſeſſion of my heart.

Formal. Avarice!

Mrs. Canvas. True, Sir; and as my cold conſtitution can do with money, and without love, perhaps your heated one will find it leſs difficult to part with your money than with your deſires—if ſo—I am going out: in that chamber you will find an object, innocent, and beautiful as an angel. But then I expect to find five hundred pounds, or the ſecurity for it on that table, at my return—nay, never heſitate—if you chuſe to keep your money at the expence of your reputation, the world ſhall know your deceit. I will expoſe you in every company, and you may well dread the malice of an enraged woman. [*Exit.*

Formal. Bit—by Jupiter—bit—I thought my cunning ſecure; but what is it in compariſon of this

this woman's?—A Machiaval, to a modern coffee-houſe politician. But what—muſt I part with my money?—five—hun—hun—hundred pounds!—Zounds! how it ſticks in my throat—if the words find ſuch a hard paſſage through my teeth, how ſhall I force the money through the knot of my purſe? What am I to do?—Dear Hypocriſy, I cannot part with thee: under thy auſpices I have diſinherited many a lawful heir, and cajoled the teſtators to give me their fortunes. If I turn thee off, this woman will hoot me through all ſociety, and I ſhall no longer be capable of my former enjoyments. I find, my friend Hypocriſy, thou wilt carry it againſt the monied intereſt—but ſtay, I'll go and take a ſurvey of the object in queſtion, though I never was in a worſe humour for a frolic in my life—Jupiter, befriend me—for I go, like thee, in a ſhower of gold.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Painting Room.

FANNY *(with a Letter in her Hand.)*

ONE of the ſervants of the houſe has juſt put this into my hand, and begs me to read it in private—Good Heavens! what, do I ſee my loved friend's hand! *(kiſſes it)*—Oh, kind Fortune! *(reads)* "Dear, but unfortunate girl, if you have "the leaſt ſenſe of ſhame, or a ſpark of gratitude, "haſte to this direction, and let me find you ſtill "worthy of the pity and compaſſion of your ill-"treated Henrietta." What can this mean?—Let me haſte, let me fly to my guardian angel. *(takes up her cloke in a hurry and runs to the door as* Formal *enters, who catches her in his arms—ſhe burſts from him)* Heavens help—what means this rudeneſs?

Formal. By Jupiter, more fair than Danae, or all the fabled nymphs that poets ſing.

Fanny. I ſhall ſink.

(Faints—he catches her in his arms.

Formal. Melting, kind, and tender—Oh, I would give thouſands for ſuch precious enjoyments.—Awake, my charmer—ope thoſe eyes that ſhame the day.

(She revives a little—he leads her to a chair.

Fanny.

Fanny. (*ſtruggling*) Forbear, cruel wretch—Heaven protect me.

Formal. (*on his knees*) 'Tis in vain—you muſt ſubmit.

Enter Sterling.

No help is near.

Sterling. Villain! thou lieſt; let go your hold, or this inſtant is your laſt.

Formal. What an interruption at the point of all my wiſhes!

Sterling. Draw, ſcoundrel.

Formal. For what?—methinks you ſhould apologiſe to me for your abrupt intruſion.

Sterling. Villain, I beg my apology at my ſword's point.

Formal. Then put it in the ſcabbard for me till I require it.

Sterling. Coward! (*looking towards* Fanny) my fury had made me forgetful of my dying Fanny! (*runs to the chair where ſhe had again fainted*) Fanny, look up—'tis Sterling calls—Oh, bleſs my eyes with one look from yours.

Fanny. (*reviving*) Oh, Colonel, is it you?—Sure Heaven ſent you as a protection to my innocence.

Sterling. Kind Heaven! to make me the happy inſtrument.

Fanny. Let us haſte from this houſe of miſchief—let us fly—carry me to that direction; (*giving him* Henrietta's *letter*) I ſhall there find a friend. (*getting up*) I tremble ſtill—my cloke.

(Sterling *goes for it where it had fallen down in the ſcuffle*—Formal *ſtanding by it*, Sterling *looks him in the face.*

Sterling.

Sterling. What, Formal! the chaſte, the virtuous Formal—Raſcal, never dare ſhew your face in this town again—Come, Madam.

[*Exeunt* Fanny *and* Sterling.

Formal. A lucky day this! My virtue and my courage both expoſed—Bit by a woman, and braved by a man—Gad, the ſhade of a man only—a ghoſt—Nouvelle left him dead—I thought there was ſome ſupernatural reaſon for my fear—What will become of me! If I do not leave the money for this woman ſhe will expoſe me; and whether I do or not, this ghoſt will be haunting me up and down, and will not only expoſe my virtue, but my courage—Gad, I'll e'en leave the kingdom for a time, and give Nouvelle a hint or two to make a good ſtory of it—I'll run off with little Autumn, for I had rather be thought a gallant than expoſed as a poltroon. So good bye, widow and ghoſt. [*Going off.*

Enter Flirt, *oppoſing him.*

Flirt. Not ſo faſt, Sir—I have overheard, and ſince all that has paſſed as I followed the Colonel to the door—I made free with the keyhole—ſo you muſt not expect to get off without ſatisfying one of the agents.

Formal. What! you, my dear?—with all my heart—I have taken my proviſional oath over Highgate horns—ſince I have been baulked of the miſtreſs, I can take up with the maid.

[*Going to take her in his arms.*

Flirt. Stand off—do you think I am afraid like the other weak thing there? (*catches the hilt of his ſword, draws it, and preſents it to his breaſt*). Now, ſtand

ſtand and deliver, or I'll be as ſhort with you as Sterling.

Formal. What! another bite—why, my dear, ſurely. [*Coaxing.*

Flirt. Come, no fawning, or whip through the body. [*Makes as if ſhe was going to lunge at him.*

Formal. Gad, take care.

Flirt. Put your purſe in that place there, (*holding out her left hand*) or take care in truth.

[*Lunging at him.*

Formal. Zounds! no, no—what a vixen.

[*Puts his hand in his pocket.*

Flirt. Come, haſte—(*throws his purſe into her hand*)—now you may go. (*Offers to take the ſword*). No, no, I'll ſee you ſafe into the ſtreet—then ſurrender it—for I am ſure I ſhall make more uſe of it than you.—Come, march.

[*She ſings ſome march, he walks before, ſhe after, with the point of the ſword to his back.*

Formal. (*looking behind apprehenſively*). Don't let the devil tempt you.

Flirt. Never fear—I have a great mind to mark him for a coward. [*Pricks him a little.*

Formal. Oh, pſhaw! Moſt happy ſhall I be to get out of this houſe.

Flirt. On then—quick march!

[*Singing quick time.* ***Exeunt.***

SCENE

SCENE II.

Racket's *Chambers in the Temple.*

Racket *ſeen at a Table reading.*

Enter CURL.

Curl. A Lady in a hackney, Sir—are you at home?

Racket. Am I ever out to a lady, you villain?

Curl. Sometimes, Sir, when they are duns.

Racket. But I have no duns now, Sir—ſhew the lady in. [*Exit* Curl.

Enter Mrs. Canvas.

Bleſs me, Mrs. Canvas, is it you? (*She lifts up one of his arms, and then the other*). What's all this?

Mrs. Canvas. You are not winged then; except, indeed, like a cockchafer, you can conceal your pinions, and only ſhew them when you fly.

Racket. Wings—pinions—I don't underſtand.

Mrs. Canvas. Why Nouvelle has killed Sterling, and winged you.—How could you be ſuch a bungler as to miſs twice with your monſtrous horſe-piſtols, and ſo barbarous as to fire at your friend a third time?

Racket. What, ſome of Nouvelle's nonſenſe—No, thank my ſtars, I am ſound wind and limb, except

except that a little immortal has juſt pierced me. Examine the wound, and try your art. (*Taking her hand, and putting it to his breaſt*). You are one of Cupid's beſt phyſicians—one of the little dog's ſharpeſt arrows gone through and through.

Mrs. Canvas. Yes, indeed, and left not a trace behind.

Racket. You miſtake—I feel the wound in my heart.

Mrs. Canvas. Then, like thoſe of your profeſſion, a retaining fee muſt precede advice.

Enter Curl.

Curl. Colonel Sterling would ſpeak to you, Sir.

Racket. Raſcal, why didn't you ſay I wasn't at home.

Curl. I thought you had no duns now, Sir, and meant to keep open houſe.

Mrs. Canvas. Where can I go—to your chamber? (*Going.*

Curl. No, you can't, Ma'am—he's between this room and that.

Mrs Canvas. What ſhall I do?

Racket. See him—ſay you come to take my opinion.

Mrs. Canvas. No—I have particular reaſons for not ſeeing him now—What ſhall I do?

Curl. Your honour knows you can ſqueeze Madam in the wardrobe.

Mrs. Canvas. Where, where?

Racket. (*opening the wardrobe door*) There—will you venture?

Mrs. Canvas. Aye, aye, any where. (*Gets in.*

Curl. Your honour has a fine work in the preſs now?

Racket. Yes, ſirrah, but don't you publiſh it. (*Goes to his chair and takes up a book*) Shew the Colonel in. (*Exit* Curl.

Enter Sterling.

Sterling. Racket, you have kept me cooling my heels in your lobby longer than a great man a begging dependant.

Racket. (*getting up*) I beg pardon, I was at a knotty point, and deaf to my ſervant.

Sterling. I am come, Charles, to unburden my heart to you.

Racket. Give me all its weight then; I would bear it, tho' it broke my own.

Sterling. Kind Charles! you know I once hinted to you that I had ſeen an object at Canvas's Widow's which had touched my heart?

Racket. Yes—come this way.

(*Taking him from the wardrobe.*)

Sterling. You recollect the ſtrong hints you gave about the widow?

Racket. Zounds! Aye,—ſoftly, ſoftly.

Sterling. Nobody can hear—they ſunk deeply into my mind. This dear object, Fanny Melville, was entruſted by Canvas's ſiſter Henrietta to his devil of a wife of his.

Racket. (*putting his hand to* Sterling's *mouth*) Huſh, huſh, huſh.

Sterling. What are you alarmed at? For a ſhort time that ſhe was to be abſent from town—'twas there I ſaw her—and ſeeing, loved—and if you ſaw her, I need not tell you why. She is the moſt

moſt captivating creature in the univerſe—that wicked Mrs. Canvas.

Racket. (*impatiently*) Prithee, Colonel—(*aſide*) I wiſh he had done; I never heard him ſo long about a ſtory in my life.

Enter Curl.

Curl. A letter from my—from your father, Sir, requires an immediate anſwer.

Racket. Let the man wait—go on, Colonel.

Sterling. No; read your letter, I inſiſt on't; I can wait.

Racket. Well, plague take it.

(*Turns on one heel, whilſt* Sterling *walks to the bookcaſe, and ſees* "*Lives of eminent Women*" *lettered on the wardrobe ſide.*)

Sterling. Lives of eminent Women! the very book I wanted to look at.

(*Going to open the bookcaſe.*

Racket. (*to* Curl.) Tell the man I'll certainly be there, (*Exit* Curl. *Turns about.*) Well, Colonel, go on—Hey, where is he?

Sterling. (*diſcovering Mrs.* Canvas *covered with cloaths*) Heyday! what the devil have we here? Zounds! a volume of biography in high preſervation. The Life of Mrs. Canvas, written by herſelf, and bound in her own vellum. Gad, Madam, this a new way of publiſhing one's own memoirs: I am afraid tho', before it can run through a ſecond edition, you muſt correct the moral and reviſe the ſentiment, or the critics will condemn you for works of ill fame.

Mrs. Canvas. (*getting out and affecting to laugh, tho' very ſillily*) He, he, he—yes, Colonel, I can excuſe your raillery on account of the drollery

of my ſituation; and Mr. Racket can tell you, if he pleaſes, how I came there.

Racket. Yes, Madam, I'll make a report to the Colonel on the caſe.

Mrs. Canvas. And, kind Colonel, your civil expreſſions ſhall entitle you to my ſervices, when again offered. (*Turns away in diſdain*) Very well, Sir; and Mr. Racket, I have ſome obligations to you I didn't before know of.

Racket. (*offering to lead her out*) Shall I have the honour of your hand?

Mrs. Canvas. Give your hand where your favours are beſtowed; I diſdain them both.

(*Exit in a rage.*

Racket. Ha, ha, ha—Curl, take care of the lady down ſtairs.

Sterling. What, is ſhe your own property, Charles, or do you uſe her as a book from a circulating library, and ſend her home when ſhe has ſerved your turn?

Racket. She came here to diſpoſe of her works, I believe, Colonel, but at too high a rate for my ſubſcription. There's a confounded deal of acid about her, and like ſome fruit, which, whilſt it tickles the palate, ſets the teeth an edge.

Sterling. Why did you hide her from me?

Racket. I wanted her to ſee you. There was no harm in her coming to take advice of a chamber counſel you know.

Sterling. (*ſlyly*) Oh no; I could have thought none. But to go on with my ſtory—I begged this devil to attend her fair charge into the country for a day or two, at a little diſtance from town.

Racket.

Racket. What, to be more at eaſe, my fly friend, with your charmer?

Sterling. From very good motives, Charles. I went with and left them there but a day or two ago. By accident, calling at the houſe in town, I found, to my ſurpriſe, that they were returned, and the maid ſo apparently confuſed, that I was alarmed—you know what love is, Racket. Hearing a noiſe over head, I came up, and lucky it was I did, for I found the dear innocent at the laſt ſtruggle in the arms of Formal.

Racket. Monſtrous! villany!

Sterling. I hurried out of that brothel, and carried her to Canvas's ſiſter Henrietta, who has bred her up from her infancy.

Racket. But who is ſhe, Colonel?

Sterling. Oh, that nobody knows—an outcaſt orphan found in a cradle, waſhed from a wreck on the ſea beach.

Racket. Found in a cradle on the ſea beach! then ſure you cannot mean a ſerious attachment?

Sterling. Faith, Charles, I do; ſhe is my choice.

Racket. But, my noble friend, your birth, your faſhion, require great alliances.

Sterling. So I am to ſacrifice the choice of my heart to faſhion.—No, no, your heart beats in uniſon with mine there, my friend.

Racket. As a friend it does; but, conſiſtent with prudence and my profeſſion, I could plead againſt your cauſe, tho' convinced of your right.

Sterling. Then I'll come into my uncle's propoſals, and take Emily.

Racket.

Racket. I put in a bar there—I'm for my own choice there.

Sterling. But he inſiſts on compliance.

Racket. There's no law to compel you.

Sterling. But ſomething above the law—neceſſity—for if I do not, I loſe him and his favours.

Racket. This is a difficult queſtion to give an opinion on. Judge Friendly, I know, agrees that you ſhould take Emily, and keep your uncle; but Judge Selfiſh rebuts this opinion, and I believe I ſhall hold with the latter.

Sterling. Then hear how Serjeant Sterling decides, who, in his own perſon unites a court both civil and military, which in matters of matrimony and gallantry have more ſpirit in deciſion than the dead letter of your common law. In juſtice to his friend, he decrees that a poſitive refuſal ſhould be ſent to the parties, which has been done, and the girl is non-ſuited, except you'll become her advocate, and take up her cauſe.

Racket. That I will, Colonel, without fee or reward, and make her caſe my own to my laſt ſhilling, and my lateſt breath. But won't this embroil you to your uncle?

Sterling. It may for a ſhort time, but it will wear off—I am a little uneaſy tho' about this buſineſs of mine in chancery; the lawyers tell me there is ſome flaw diſcovered in my claim, which makes my right leſs ſure than they thought: however, that and my peerage will be decided to-day or to-morrow; I ſhall either be your Lordſhip with ſome thouſands per annum, or plain Sterling and my commiſſion.

Racket. Fortune forbid! will you ſend to my father's

father's and let me know your deſtiny? I ſhall be there, and anxious on your account.

Sterling. I will.—Adieu!

Racket. Succeſs attend you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A Room in Alderman STOCKS' *Houſe.*

Lady LUDGATE, EMILY, *and* STOCKS.

Stocks. I am happy indeed, my Lady, that you are at length perſuaded into an opinion that my boy will make your daughter a good huſband.

Lady Ludgate. I am confident Mr. Racket will never give me reaſon to change my ſentiments of him, Mr. Alderman.

Stocks. And this young lady is of the ſame opinion?

Emily. (careleſsly) I don't know indeed, Sir, *(aſide)* but, I believe, I ſhall make bold to try.

Stocks. Altho' Charles is a little volatile, yet has he a ſteadineſs of diſpoſition where he is attached.

Emily. But was he ever attached, Sir?

Stocks. Yes, Madam, my lady tells me he has been long attached to you, tho' I knew nothing of it.

Lady Ludgate. Her humour is a little contradictory now and then, Mr. Stocks, that's all.

Emily.

Emily. So it was when I refuſed Colonel Sterling for my lover, tho' he, provoking creature, would not give me an opportunity of ſhewing my perverſeneſs.

Lady Ludgate. (ſlyly to Stocks*)* My dear, we'll not force you to ſhew your oppoſing diſpoſition here—Mr. Stocks and I will break off the matter.

Emily. I am afraid then, my Lady, you will oblige my nature to break out in contradiction.

Stocks. Indeed, young lady, I know a great many rules in arithmetic, but never yet learnt this female one of contradiction. Will you deſcend to our practice, and inſtruct me in the direct and golden rule of truth.

Emily. Then, Sir, without figure of ſpeech—but, to tell you a truth, contrary, indeed, to all your ſcheme of numbers, yet as clearly juſt as by the rules of marriage—that one and one make but one—your ſon, Charles Racket, will find his ſum of happineſs no where ſo complete as in—in—in—help me out, Sir, I am afraid—as—in—in.

Stocks. Making one integral of it with that of Emily Ludgate.

Emily. That I'll declare to his face, and let him prove the contrary—if he can.

Stocks. Zooks! there's ſo much ſpirit in her contradiction, that I have a great mind to ſubtract forty from ſixty-five, and make love to her myſelf. But there's a good thought come into my head—ſuppoſe I don't let him know that the lady he has made his choice of, and mine, are the ſame, and try whether his affection to you, or his duty to me, will have the greateſt influence over him.

Emily.

Emily. A lucky hint—and if he does not vote for me, I'll really go over into oppoſition.

Lady Ludgate. There—he is coming.

Stocks. Ladies, walk into the next room, and you'll hear every thing that paſſes here.

[*Exeunt Ladies one way,*

Enter Racket *another.*

Racket. I received your ſummons, Sir, and pay ſubmiſſion to your commands.

Stocks. Right, boy, and I hope you'll do ſo in every thing. I can no longer delay this marriage I ſpoke to you of, and you muſt decide whether my indulgence has had a proper effect upon you.

Racket. Then, Sir, although there is nothing on earth I more ardently deſire than to convince you of my high ſenſe of duty and gratitude—yet, in this caſe it is impoſſible—I have already fixed my affections on an object, beautiful——

Stocks. (interrupting him) Without my conſent?

Racket. Without my own, Sir; ſhe forced my heart before I could aſk its conſent—good-natured—accompliſhed—ſhe is, Sir, one of the wealthieſt heireſſes in town.

Stocks. I don't care—I have given my word; and, except you marry my choice, the whole of my fortune ſhall go to the diſappointed lady. You have your choice now.

Racket. Then to heſitate between love and money is to debaſe the latter by the competition—I diſdain the wealth, though I feel for reducing, Sir, to acting ſo unnatural a part.

Stocks. 'Tis you that are unnatural, ſirrah— you ſhall ſee the girl, though I am determined—I'll

ſend her into your tête-à-tête—I'll be obſtinate in that. [*Exit.*

Racket. And I'll be as obſtinate as you—for I won't look at her.

[*Goes to the other ſide of the ſtage, and turns his back.*

Re-enter Stocks, *leading in* Emily.

Stocks. There he is, Madam. My Lady and I will now watch in the next room. [*Exit.*

Emily. (after ſome ſilence). Hem.

Racket. Hem too—but I'll be hanged if I ſpeak firſt.

Emily. (in a very ſqueaking voice). I was ſent in here to be courted—I ſee nothing though but a figure cut in wood I believe, for he turns his back upon me, and doesn't ſpeak.

Racket. Zounds! what a voice; it makes one's very blood run cold, like a ſharp knife againſt a china plate. [*Aſide.*

Emily. (Aſide). What, he won't ſpeak—then I'll addreſs him.—*(In a ſqueaking tone again)* Sir, are you to be my huſband?

Racket. No, God bleſs you, Miſs—not for the world.

Emily. Why, Sir?

Racket. Becauſe I love another.—*(Aſide).* This muſt be ſome pert ſlut, with no ſmall quantity of gold to gild her proportion of braſs.

Emily. I have heard you have often ſworn to love me.

Racket. Faith then, Madam, I ſwore a confounded lie.

Emily. (Aſide). Perhaps ſo, Charles. Let me ſee with what face you can deny it, Sir?

Racket.

Racket. (*turning his head round, with his eyes ſhut*) There, Miſs—without a bluſh on it.

Emily. What are you blind, Sir?

Racket. Totally ſo—to your charms.

Emily. (*aſide*) Saucy fellow—Then you refuſe me for a wife? (*Drawing up ſoftly towards him.*

Racket. That I do indeed.

Emily. You'll be ſorry for it.

Racket. (*impatiently*) Pſhaw! not I truly.

Emily. I offer you once more.

Racket. (*in a rage*) Zounds! you may offer a thouſand times—(*ſhe cloſe to him*)—impertinent creature.

Emily. (*ſlapping him gently on the cheek*) Take that, Sir, then—and (*in her own voice*) I'll go a wooing to ſome more civil and obliging gentleman.

Racket. (*ſtarting back, and rubbing both his eyes*) Emily—good Heavens!

Lady Ludgate and Stocks. (*entering*) Ha, ha, ha!

Emily. (*running to the front of the ſtage,* Racket *following*) No, Sir; your diſtance, if you pleaſe—your rudeneſs is intolerable—blind to my charms—denying ſolemn vows without a bluſh on your face—rejecting my offers over and over. (*With affected paſſion*) If your father ſtands to his word, he'll give me his fortune.

Racket. Let him—no fine is large enough for the folly of refuſing ſuch a jewel.

Emily. (*to Stocks*) What ſay you, Sir—do you hold to your bargain?

Stocks. Certainly, Madam.

Emily. Then I am ſo much more wealthy—Would, if happineſs were in fortune, I were richer than the Indies, I would throw it all, and—myſelf too—(*turning to* Racket, *with a look*

of great tenderneſs) Ah! dear, dear Charles—into the arms of him—that could ſacrifice a fond father's favour in conſtancy to me.

Racket. (*tenderly embracing her*) Treaſure of my ſoul—my generous Emily!—And I will be ſuch a miſer o'er my riches, that theſe eyes ſhall never ceaſe watching them, nor truſt them further than this diſtance.

Stocks. Zooks! He's my own boy, and makes love juſt as I uſed to do.

Racket. But, Emily, my lady, Sir, how comes all this happineſs?—Speak my angel.

Emily. Not too much fondneſs before marriage, Sir—keep ſome—perhaps we ſhall want it.

Stocks. Oh, now ſhe is going to figures again in contradiction.

Lady Ludgate. 'Tis my buſineſs to inform you of that, Mr. Racket—Sir Figure Finance ſeeing an oppoſition in his family to unconditional ſubmiſſion, his nephew having a rebellious ſpirit of independency about him, gave way to the exiſting circumſtances of the times, ſo I did not chuſe to continue the debate, and he withdrew his motion.

Emily. You had though, Charles, previouſly ſecured your election here.

(Putting her hand to her heart.

Stocks. Still all that would not have done, boy, for there was a doubt about your qualification—had not I——Here, Ledger, bring the box—*(calling to* Ledger, *who enters with the box, containing letters patent, &c.)* produced the title deeds, and inſured your ſeat—not lent as a temporary ſalve to your oath and conſcience—but, *bonâ fide,* your own freehold.

freehold. There you are, you dog, the firſt of the Stocks that ever was ingrafted for nobility.

(*Shewing the letters patent to* Racket, *who attempts to read.*

Racket. (*laughing very heartily*) What's, what's, what's all this, Sir? I can't make it out.

Emily. Do you not ſee that your father, to ſecure my mother's intereſt in your canvas for me, has procured you patents of precedence from the ſaleable fund of ſome titular ſtate on the Continent?

Stocks. (Racket *and* Emily, *both laughing very heartily*) What's the fellow bewitched?

Emily. His promotion has turned his head, Mr. Alderman—a common effect in this world, and what you ſhould not be ſurpriſed at.

Lady Ludgate. Where's the other dignity, Mr. Stocks?

Stocks. Gadzookers! true, my Lady—Charles, you are ſtill obſcure in the crowd till this ſtar ariſes to blaze forth your nobility. (*Taking the ribbon and ſtar out of the box*, Emily *and* Racket *ſtill laughing*) My Lady, will you inveſt him with the order?

Lady Ludgate. With pleaſure, Mr. Alderman.

[Racket *runs back.*

Emily. What, refuſe the honour of knighthood from ſo fair a hand, Sir?

Stocks. Down on your knees, ſirrah. (*Forcing him down on his knees, whilſt* Lady Ludgate *and* Emily *pin the ſtar to his breaſt, and put on the ribbon, and* Stocks *lays his cane over him*) Now riſe up—no longer plain Charles Racket—but knight and baron.

Lady Ludgate. Now indeed he looks ſomething like a nobleman and a knight.

Stocks.

Stocks. Zooks! and a very bright night too, with ſuch a ſhining ſtar.

Racket. Yes, Sir; and ſince you have given me the hint, I'll be aſhamed to ſhew my ſtars in the day-time.

[*Pulls off the ſtar and ribbon, and puts them into the box, with which* Ledger *goes off.*

Lady Ludgate. Mr. Racket, won't you let the world ſee your honours?

Racket. With your permiſſion, my Lady, they ſhall ſhine within the ſphere of our own family only--Madame La Baronne *(to Emily)* will excuſe me, if I content myſelf with the rights of an Engliſh commoner in my own country—whoſe true freedom and juſt franchiſes——Oh may they never change!—are the moſt glorious and dignified titles of a noble Britiſh mind.

Lady Ludgate. Well, Sir, I have ſatisfied my ſcruples—you are enobled, and I have ſaved the honour of my family.

Enter Servant.

Servant. A lady and Jew, Sir, below on buſineſs; and two ladies, whom I have ſhewn into another room, would ſpeak to you in private.

Stocks. I am coming—*(Exit Servant)*—Charles, I can't do the buſineſs of both at once—go and ſee one of the parties, whilſt I ſettle with the other. Theſe ladies will walk into the drawing-room, and excuſe us for a moment. Charles, take choice of the parties.

Emily. (a little pettiſhly) Oh, he'll chuſe the ladies.

Stocks.

Stocks. No, Madam; I am apt to think he'll prefer the Jew—he has many friends in the ſynagogue.

Racket. Pardon, Sir—I have read my recantation from the errors of Judaiſm, and returning to the true pale hope, from great faith in the powers of my lovely guide here, *(to Emily)* to catch a ſpark of her excellence, and to ſhine in every prudent virtue. [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Private Room in Alderman STOCKS' *Houſe.*

HENRIETTA, CANVAS, *and* FANNY.

FANNY.

FORGET him, Madam.

Henrietta. Yes, my love, for you cannot think of him with propriety—he is beyond your hopes, Fanny; and you're indulging a paſſion for one ſo much above you, and with whom you can have no chance of an honourable connection, muſt be improper, if not criminal.

Fanny. Criminal!—oh, do not alarm me, dear, dear friend, nor frighten peace from my boſom—alas! my only portion—I will—I will forget him—yes, my poor heart ſhall ſtruggle—I will take his picture from my boſom *(taking it from thence)*—I will bathe it with my tears—I will waſh out his remembrance.

Henrietta. Do ſo, my love—your Henrietta will help you—not with cruel harſh counſel, but with gentle perſuaſive reaſon, and time will aſſiſt us with its lenient oblivion.

Enter

Enter Racket.

Racket. I have the honour, ladies, to attend your commands.

Henrietta. Our buſineſs was with your father, Mr. Racket.

Racket. He is at preſent very buſy, Madam, and begs me to attend your wiſhes—*(aſide)* Heavens! what an angel that is.

Henrietta. Well, Sir, I believe I can ſettle the matter as well with you—Here is a young lady who has ſome jewels that ſhe would be glad to raiſe a ſum of money on, which I find it inconvenient to advance at preſent. My friend, Mr. Stocks, is ſometimes ready to oblige on theſe occaſions—and I have the liberty to call on him on this. Here is the ſecurity, Sir.

(Producing a caſket with jewels.

Racket. (aſide) It certainly muſt be ſhe—he told me he left her at Miſs Canvas's.—You, Madam, I believe are a lady I heard my friend Colonel Sterling ſpeak of—Miſs Melville, or I am deceived?

Fanny. My name is Melville, Sir.

Racket. The Colonel is my moſt particular friend, Miſs Canvas; whilſt I have a farthing in the world it is at his ſervice, and I am ſure I ſhall give him the greateſt pleaſure in advancing Miſs Melville whatever money ſhe may have occaſion for, without a thought of ſecurity—let me know the ſum, that I may run for it.—*(aſide)* How ſtrangely ſhe intereſts my feeling.

Fanny. Generous man!

Henrietta. Your behaviour, Sir, ſpeaks ſo much the friend and man of honour, that I muſt confeſs

to you the money is for the aſſiſtance of Colonel Sterling himſelf.

Racket. For Colonel Sterling, Madam!—How can he want ſuch aſſiſtance?

Fanny. Tell him, dear friend.

Henrietta. Why, Sir, we have heard that he has been diſappointed in the hopes of his chancery ſuit, and is now in the greateſt diſtreſs.

Racket. Sterling in diſtreſs! where? where?

Henrietta. We do not know where—but to ſend to him wherever he could be found was the errand that brought that dear amiable girl here.

Racket. Be ſo good as to walk into the next oom—I will return in half an hour.—(*to* Fanny) My dear lady, be comforted—I feel for you a brother's tenderneſs, and will relieve Sterling, or be a beggar with him.

(*Exit with them, and returns immediately, pulling in* Stocks.

Stocks. Zooks! what's the matter? what's all this impatience for?

Racket. Tell me, Sir, does Colonel Sterling owe you money?

Stocks. Is that all?—He does.

Racket. And, ſurely, you have not been cruel enough to diſtreſs him for it.

Stocks. No, not I, tho' there's a couple below would adviſe me to ſome miſchievous trick.

Racket. A couple below! who—what?

Stocks. One of them is the widow of Canvas, the other an ill-looking jew, who perhaps you know better than I.

Racket. Aye! and what do they ſay, Sir?

Stocks. Why, they tell me he is a ruined man, and going to run off, and bid me look to my money

money—and prudence tells me, Charles, that, altho' it is againſt my nature to do an ungenerous act, yet it is equally an impeachment on my credit to be deluded into a fooliſh one.

Racket. 'Tis all a falſehood, Sir—Sterling is as incapable of running from a juſt creditor as he is from a generous enemy.—(*thoughtful*) What had I beſt do? Will you, Sir, give me all the money you have in the houſe directly?

Stocks. Eh! what going to rob your father in his own houſe.

Racket. Yes, Sir, I am indeed going to rob you of what you feel the greateſt reluctance to part with—an opportunity of doing a benevolent action—I am going to the relief of a friend.

Stocks. Go then to Ledger for the money. (Racket *going*) Here—Holloa!—and if your friend be in real want, take Samuel Stocks with you.

[*Making the motion of writing with his right fingers on his left palm*—Racket, *running off, meets* Sterling, *who holds him in his arms.*

Sterling. Let me preſs you to myſelf, my other half—behold my long expectations all confirmed—your friend a peer, with ſome thouſands per annum.

Racket. Is it true—is it poſſible?

Sterling. If there be any truth in a decree of the Court of Chancery, or a deciſion in the Houſe of Peers, it is ſo.

Stocks. Oh, there's truth enough in it then—I wiſh I had ſome thouſands per annum on the ſame tenure.

Racket. (embracing him.) Joy, joy to thee, Sterling—ſuffer me to call you without form, till I can teach my tongue to title you.

Sterling. Never let form take place between us.

Racket. Sterling, then, ſtill—Sir, let me introduce a new acquaintance to you—Lord Sterling.

Stocks. Aye, Charles, I had the pleaſure of ſeeing his perſon once, when a Commoner—but I don't care if, like ſome of his brother Peers, his dignities make him forgetful of his old acquaintance.

Sterling. I ſhall always conſider my knowledge of you as an honour, Mr. Alderman—nor can I forget that my name ſtands ſecurity for ſome favours which I hope now to cancel.

Stocks. The name of my ſon's friend, my Lord, is impreſſed on his father's heart in characters that cannot be cancelled—'tis the beſt ſecurity for the little favours of friendſhip.

Sterling. But my written ſignature, Mr. Stocks—my bond, and obligation?

Stocks. Your written ſignature I deſtroyed—forgive me the preſumption—the only obligation I wiſhed to ſubſiſt between us was the bond of your Lordſhip's eſteem.

Racket. How came you, Sir, to put on the diſguiſe of an uſurer?

Stocks. That eye, Charles, that can pierce into the heart, and find no falſehood there, will readily forgive the little external artifice that would conceal a benefit. But, in fact, I was a true uſurer, not from a motive of acquiring gold or ſilver, boy, but for the attainment of more—of more durable

durable riches. Heaven itſelf becomes your debtor there, and grants accumulative intereſt to—the principle of ſecretly doing good.

Sterling. Noble and generous man!—my father alſo—if you will permit me, Charles, to ſhare that title.

Racket. We have long, my Lord, been more than brothers;—but I have ſomething to communicate that will ſurpriſe you.—Will you, Sir, (*to* Stocks) order the woman and Jew to be detained, and for a moment entertain my Lady and Emily, whilſt I ſpeak to my friend.

Stocks. I will order their detention, Charles, and entertain the ladies as well as an old man can. [*Exit.*

Racket. Are you really ſerious in the attachment you profeſſed to the fair one under Miſs Canvas's protection?

Sterling. I am not apt to jeſt in theſe matters, Charles. I do aſſure you I mean immediately to lay both my title and fortune at her feet—but why do you now aſk the queſtion?

Racket. Becauſe I would give you joy, my friend, of one of the moſt intereſting and charming creatures I ever ſaw, and heighten your admiration of her.

Sterling. (*impatiently.*) How, Racket?

Racket. Some meddling dæmon told her you were in a moſt miſerable dilemma.—The amiable girl, with Miſs Canvas, poſted hither. She, in the extreme of diſtreſs, but with a natural dignity, offered ſome jewels—the poor orphan's little all—as a pledge for money; which money, I found, was to be ſent to you.

Sterling.

Sterling. *(in great impatience.)* And where is ſhe now?

Racket. In this houſe.

Sterling. In this houſe!—*(Going off.)* Lead me to her.

Racket. Stay—I'll conduct her hither.

[*Exit* Racket.—*Re-enters immediately again, leading in* Henrietta *and* Fanny.]

Henrietta. *(ſtarting.)* Colonel Sterling!

Fanny. Good Heavens!

Sterling. *(aſide.)* I can ſcarce reſtrain my ardour from catching her in my arms.

Henrietta. We little expected the pleaſure of finding you here, Colonel.

Sterling. My happineſs is as unexpected, Madam—I called at your houſe in my way hither, and was diſappointed not to find you within.

Henrietta. Yes, Sir, we came here on buſineſs.

Racket. And, Madam, I have been an unfaithful depoſitory of your ſecret. I have a damned babbling tongue, and cannot, for my ſoul, hold it ſtill, when it can ſound the praiſes of a generous action.—Lord Sterling will tell you ſo.

Henrietta and Fanny. *(in ſurpriſe.)* Lord Sterling!

Sterling. Yes, Miſs Canvas, I may now boaſt my title—but cannot think my dignity complete, without you join with me to prevail upon this lady *(taking* Fanny's *hand)* to partake of it with me.

Fanny. My Lord!

Sterling. My Angel!—To no purpoſe have I fortune or rank without my Fanny—mine, I will call

call her—will conſent to a ſhare—to the command of both.

Fanny. This is inſupportable!

Henrietta. Permit me to ſpeak for her—her ſpirits have ſuffered a great deal to-day.

Sterling. Do, Madam—and let me have a kind advocate in you.

Henrietta. I am too well acquainted with your Lordſhip's character to want perſuaſion there;—but my own character, as her protectreſs and friend, obliges me to lay before you, that you are wiſhing to connect yourſelf with an unknown orphan.

Sterling. I know the whole, Madam—my amiable Fanny has herſelf diſcloſed it to me.

Henrietta. And will your Lordſhip ſtoop to one whom nobody knows—whoſe only friend you ſee? Does your Lordſhip conſider your rank—your connections?

Sterling. I have no rank that Miſs Melville will not fill with grace—no connection that ſhe will not give a luſtre to, if ſhe will ſuffer me to call her mine. Speak, my charming fair one—crown my happineſs.

Fanny. I have no voice to deny your Lordſhip, and too much fear to accept your generous offers. My friend muſt determine for me.

Sterling. (*eagerly.*) Speak, Miſs Canvas.

Henrietta. I cannot further reſiſt your Lordſhip's wiſhes, when I know they meet my Fanny's alſo.

Sterling. (*embracing* Fanny.) Then I am happy indeed!

Racket. I congratulate you, my friend, on the choice of a divine woman. And, Madam, I give you

you joy of an honour to nobility and human nature. Gad, I am ſo touched by this love, that I muſt go and play a little at it with my own charmer.—Sterling, I leave you with the ladies at preſent—and, when you have a moment's leiſure, you'll come into the next room, where I will ſhew you my prize, whoſe hand I have taken poſſeſſion of to-day. We'll introduce two of the fineſt and beſt women to each other.

[*Exit.*

Sterling. And now, my love, we'll pay a tribute (*turning to* Henrietta) where much is due.—How ſhall I repay you, Madam, for ſuch a gift as this?

Henrietta. By eſteeming it, as I know your Lordſhip will, when you are as intimate with the value of it as I am.

Fanny. (*embracing* Henrietta.) My friend!—my guardian angel!

Sterling. Let us now join our friends.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE THE LAST.

A Drawing-Room in Alderman STOCKS' *Houſe.*

Lady LUDGATE, EMILY, *and* NOUVELLE.

Nouvelle. Finding your Ladyſhip was come here, I only juſt in my way ſtopped at Miſs Canvas's,

Canvas's, and half a dozen other places, to leave the news—then flew hither to tell you.

Lady Ludgate. And what is it, Mr. Nouvelle?

Nouvelle. Colonel Sterling, taking ſome unwarrantable liberties with Mr. Canvas, provoked Formal to draw his ſword. They paſſed a thruſt or two, and Formal ran Sterling through the body, as he thought—but this was not the caſe, for he was only run through the coat—but, fainting in the fight, fell down, and frightened poor Formal to France.

Emily. Very droll, certainly, Mr. Nouvelle.

Nouvelle. It has, however, gone more ſeriouſly with Sterling, ſince his Chancery ſuit, and claim of Peerage, have both been given againſt him; and ſome Bailiffs, who were ready after the deciſion, clapping him on the ſhoulder, were carrying him to the King's Bench, but——

Stocks. (*entering.*) A thouſand pardons, ladies—but buſineſs muſt be done.

Emily. Hasn't Charles finiſhed with his ladies yet, Sir?

Stocks. I left him with a noble friend.—He'll be here directly.

Nouvelle. Yes, your Ladyſhip has acted moſt prudently in preferring a connection with ſo eminent a magiſtrate as Mr. Alderman Stocks.

Stocks. I have not the felicity of knowing you, Sir, but thank you for your compliment.

Lady Ludgate. Don't you know, Mr. Nouvelle, Mr. Alderman?—Let me introduce him then as my acquaintance?

Nouvelle. (*bowing often.*) Sir, Sir.

Stocks. (*imitating him.*) Sir, Sir, Sir.—[*Aſide.*] Zooks, the fellow cuts more capers than a Macedonian on horſeback.

Lady Ludgate. Now, Mr. Nouvelle, go on with your ſtory.

Nouvelle. Nothing more, my Lady, only that report ſays Colonel Sterling was reſcued, and eſcaped abroad.

Stocks. Who, Sir—who?

Nouvelle. Sir Figure Finance's nephew, Colonel Sterling.

Stocks. Mercy on us! here's another deception, and counterfeit has crept into the city.

Nouvelle. I hope, Sir, I don't convey bad news to you; 'twas ſaid, indeed, he was deeply in your debt. [*Enter* Racket.

Racket. My Lady, my dear Emily, excuſe me.—(*To* Stocks.) You have kept the woman and Jew ſafe, Sir.

Stocks. I don't, indeed, I can't credit my own ſenſes

Racket. Emily, I will now introduce Lord Sterling, and his amiable wife that is to be, to you.

Emily. Where are they, Charles?

Stocks. Aye, where are they, boy—abroad!

Racket. Abroad, Sir!—didn't you ſee his Lordſhip below?

Stocks. I thought ſo—and he and you told me ſo; but the two people below ſware to the contrary, and that gentleman confirms their account.

Nouvelle. Who—I, Sir, I?

Stocks. Yes—you, Sir, you,

Nouvelle.

Nouvelle. I ſaid, Report ſaid ſo, Sir—(*aſide*) Periſh theſe downright cits.

Enter Sterling, Henrietta, *and* Fanny.

Racket. (*introducing them ſeverally*) Lady Ludgate, Emily, Lord Sterling, Miſs Melville.

Nouvelle. (*aſide*) I had better make off—Here are articles of intelligence enough for a freſh gazette. (*Exit unſeen.*

Stocks. (*with his arms folded as in thought*) I am loſt in aſtoniſhment—is this true or falſe?

Racket. Will your Lordſhip convince my father that you are really here preſent?

Sterling. What conviction does Mr. Stocks require more perſuaſive than my preſence?

Stocks. Why, my Lord, there are two people below who perſuade me you are not here, and one in this room to ſubſtantiate their teſtimony—(*looking about for* Novelle) Hip—holloa!—my lady, where's your acquaintance?

Lady Ludgate. My acquaintance, Sir—the acquaintance of the whole world.

Racket. Mr. Nouvelle, my Lord!

Henrietta. 'Twas his intelligence brought us here.

Racket. I forgive Nouvelle his nonſenſe, becauſe there's not much malice in it—but theſe people below who mean a villanous miſchief I will expoſe. [*Rings the bell.*

Enter Servant.

Order the Lady and the Jew to walk in.

(*Exit* Servant.

Enter Mrs. Canvas *and* Solomon.

All. (*in ſurpriſe*) Mrs. Canvas!

Mrs. Canvas. (*ſtartled at firſt, but recovering herſelf*) They here!—I know my part.

Solomon. (*attempting to get off*) I may as well ſteal off.

Racket. (*ſtopping him*) By your leave, Mr. Iſraelite, you are called into court to give evidence.

Mrs. Canvas. I am happy to ſee you, Colonel Sterling.—My dear Fanny, how could you leave me ſo abruptly?

Fanny. Lord Sterling, Madam, will plead an apology for the ſuddenneſs of my departure.

Mrs. Canvas. Lord Sterling!—I may give his Lordſhip joy, then, of his title.

Stocks. But, pray Madam, will you go on with his Lordſhip's travels, which you were giving me an account of below?

Mrs. Canvas. I don't underſtand you, Sir.

Stocks. No—why I ſpeak Engliſh—We were not abroad ſo long as to forget our own language neither.

Mrs. Canvas. That Jew was ſaying ſomething about his Lordſhip.

Stocks And you were interpreting his Hebrew, Madam.

Solomon. (*aſide*) What impudence! more than falls to the ſhare of an attorney's clerk—But I ſee my evidence won't be taken in this Chriſtian court till I circumciſe my beard, and turn of the ſame perſuaſion.

[*Taking off his beard, and diſcovering himſelf.*

Racket.

Racket. Billy Brief!

Sterling. Alias Rouleau.

Stocks. Alias friend Brim.

Solomon. Alias Solomon.

Stocks. Zooks! he's a corporation within himſelf.

Racket. With your leave, Mr. Alderman, we'll have a company of uſurers eſtabliſhed, and this Proteus of pelf ſhall repreſent the livery in his own capacity.

Stocks. Good Sir, do you then continue his Lordſhip's travels, as I find you ſpeak Engliſh.

Solomon. 'Twas that lady, Sir, that took his Lordſhip for an alien, and would have forced him out of the kingdom.—I would have kept him in this land of liberty, and put him in priſon.

Racket. (*to Mrs.* Canvas, *who ſtands ſilent*) Why don't you plead, Madam? The Court will take your ſilence for guilt.

Lady Ludgate. Indeed, Mrs. Canvas, you ſeem to have played your cards ill here.

Emily. You have not dealt with your uſual ſucceſs, Madam.

Mrs. Canvas. (*attempting to get off,* Racket *ſtopping her*) Come, no ſhuffling or cutting—Go on with your game, and pique his Lordſhip. What! you won't ſpeak?

Stocks. No—Zooks! ſhe is playing dumbury.

Henrietta and Fanny. Have pity.

Sterling. Let me play mediator—I forgive.

Mrs. Canvas. You forgive—I deſpiſe you and your company. [*Exit.*

Racket. (*ſtopping* Solomon, *attempting to follow her*) You haven't yet aſked leave, Sir.

Solomon.

Solomon. Do, Mr. Racket—let me follow my partner's lead, and get out. I'll henceforth renounce all odd tricks, and play fair.

Stocks. (*mimicking* Brim's *quaker tone*) Alas, friend Brim, the wiles of the wicked! does thee conſider the deadly ſin of diſſimulation, and counterfeit—yea, verily, the ſin of deceit is deadly.

Solomon. (*mimicking* Stocks' *deafneſs*) Umph.

Stocks. Out, villain. [*Exit* Solomon.

Racket. And now, my Lord, that we got rid of our plagues, we'll think of nothing but the pleaſures that are the reſult of our own choice. (*Pointing to* Emily *and* Fanny) When formed with diſcretion, it is the baſis of happineſs.

Sterling. True, my friend, there is nothing like our own choice—Love cannot be conſtrained—it is a peculiar plant that can be forced in no ſoil, but is the ſpontaneous growth of the heart alone.

Stocks. Zooks! there's ſo much ſaid about this love, that I have a great mind to be in love too, and make my own choice.

Racket. (*aſide*) Do, Sir, and take my lady.

Stocks. Out, ſirrah; you had your own choice—would you control mine?

Henrietta. My Lord, I muſt mention to you and this company one thing—that although Miſs Melville's parents are unknown, yet I have the ſtrongeſt reaſon to ſuppoſe them people of ſome condition. This caſket, with the rich jewels encloſed, and this picture, which was therein alſo—whoſe colours now are ſomewhat faded by the water—yet ſtill bear a great reſemblance to my Fanny's features, were found in the cradle with her, one morning by my tenants, as it lay waſhed on ſhore, buoyed up on part of the wreck of a veſſel,

veſſel, ſuppoſed to have been loſt the preceding very ſtormy night, and on board of which all had periſhed, as none were ever heard of after, except this very providentially preſerved child—Almoſt dead, the little infant was conveyed to my arms—by care I recovered her to life; and having liberally rewarded thoſe who found her, have kept theſe things as teſtimonials of her birth. Mr. Alderman, (*to* Stocks, *who ſtands between her and* Sterling) will you give theſe over to his Lordſhip.

[*Giving him the picture.*

Stocks. (*looking at it, is very much agitated*) Mercy, Heavens! what do I ſee! my Anna's ſelf—the copy of the very original I carry next my heart—(*taking a miniature from his boſom*) the very counterpart of each other—my wife kept one, and I the other—found with the infant, Miſs Canvas?

Henrietta. Yes, Sir; found in the cradle with my Fanny—and theſe jewels—in this caſket—all ſafely laſhed together—as it were, by the tender care of ſome one—who, perhaps, hoped the child might be preſerved—laſt September was eighteen years.

Stocks. The time perfectly accords with my loſs—too well I know theſe jewels alſo—oh—it is—it is my child. [*Running to embrace her.*

All. Amazement!

Stocks. None ſaved but her, Madam. [*Weeping.*

Henrietta. None, that were ever heard of, Sir.

Stocks. My Anna—my Anna!—yet, gracious Heaven, doſt thou temper thy chaſtiſements with mercy, and giveſt me my child—(*looking at her tenderly*). Her mother's graces I now plainly ſee betray

betray themſelves in her, and proclaim her mine. My daughter! [*Embracing her.*

Fanny. Have I then found a parent—oh, my father! [*Throwing herſelf in his arms.*

Racket. And I a ſiſter too—Nature had taught me to feel for you a brother's love.

Stocks. My children both! Heaven, I thank thee—my Lord, you called me father—I claim that title now by preſenting you my daughter.

Sterling. Could my Fanny's value be enhanced, Sir, ſhe would become a richer gift by receiving her from you. Charles, we oft have thought each other brothers.

Racket. Yes, our kindred hearts had long anticipated this declaration of Heaven's will.

Henrietta. Let me ſhare in this general joy, my Fanny.

Fanny. My more than mother!—To you the beſt thanks are due for the happineſs of the occaſion.

Emily. Nor can I ſtand an unconcerned ſpectator, without teſtifying my happineſs in my new-found relation.

Lady Ludgate. Mr. Alderman, I congratulate you on the acquiſition of your daughter; and you, my Lord, in finding your lady, from a connection with a part of my family not unworthy of your own.

Sterling. My Fanny's appearance alone, my Lady, ſufficiently convinced me, that her birth, had I caſt a thought on't, was worthy of any rank, and makes me the happieſt of men.

Fanny. And, if the knowledge of my affection can increaſe that happineſs, I will candidly confeſs that I almoſt loved you before I ſaw you.

This

This picture (*taking his miniature from her boſom*) firſt attracted my attention, and your Lordſhip's preſence ſoon completed what the painting had begun—ſince then it has been the conſtant companion of my boſom, as your Lordſhip has been of my heart—and I hope that my good-natured friends here will be pleaſed with the Picture.

Sterling and Racket. (*taking* Fanny *and* Emily *by the hand* And applaud

MY OWN CHOICE.

FINIS.

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